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SCS #1445

Thomas F. Torrance

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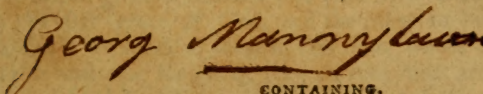
THE

WORKS

OF THE REVEREND AND PIOUS

MR. ANDREW GRAY,

LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN GLASGOW.



CONTAINING,

I. The Mystery of Faith opened up.
II. Two Sermons concerning the Great Salvation.
III. A Sermon on Death.
IV. The Great and Precious Promises.
V. A Sermon concerning the Usefulness of Faith
VI. Three Discourses concerning the Faith of Assurance.
VII. Directions and Instigations to the Duty of Prayer.
VIII. The Way how a Christian ought to keep his Heart.
IX. Arguments and Directions for hearing the Voice of the Rod.
X. The Spiritual Warfare.
XI The Mystery of Spiritual Contentment
XII. Eleven Communion Sermons.
XIII Exhortations and Discourses at serving of Tables at the Communion of Kirkliston, upon the 12th June, 1653.
XIV. A Letter from Mr Gray to my Lord Waristoun.

John iii. 18. *He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God.*

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THE

PREFACE.

AMONGST many weighty and soul-piercing sentences that you will find in the following Sermons, this is one, "That "the professors of this age, whether they go to heaven or hell, "will be the greatest debitors that shall be in either place: the one "to the free grace of God, and the other to his justice." And certainly, if we speak of these in this time, whose blessed lot it shall be to inherit the kingdom, they cannot but acknowledge themselves indebted to his love, above all that have gone before them, for washing them from such ugly pollutions, as this generation hath been defiled with, for bringing them through so great tribulations, preserving them in the midst of so great temptations and dangerous snares as have compassed them; yea, and still keeping in the light before them, notwithstanding of so many blasts (if we may so speak) from all the four winds of hell to blow it out; and, on the other hand, if we should speak of those, who in this generation shall perish, assuredly their debt unto Divine Justice must be exceeding great, above all who are gone down to the pit before them, because the roll of their mercies are found to have been many cubits longer, and many cubits broader than theirs who lived in the preceding ages: and the greater things that the Lord hath wrought in our days, hath borne a greater testimony against the wickedness, hardness, and atheism of this time, than many former. But above all, the great measure of gospel-light that he hath no less plentifully offered, than wonderfully preserved to this generation, beyond all our ancestors, hath undoubtedly made the sin of those who shall utterly reject their own mercy, so out of measure sinful, and their unbelief so exceedingly inexcusable, that their guilt must needs justify Chorazin and Bethsaida, or Sodom and Gomorrah, in that day, when every man shall give account of himself to God. And amongst the many preaching witnesses, that (alas! we are afraid) shall compear in that day against many yet living in their pleasures, and dead while they live; this now glorified Author cannot but be one, whose testimony must be very condemning, especially to the vain, loose, negligent, and time-wasting youth in this age. For when he was first drawn to the ministry, he was but a youth, indeed scarce twenty years complete, far within that age, which by the constitution of this church, (except in case of more than common abilities, which indeed he had) is required for entering into that great and holy calling, and for the space of two years after (which was all the time that the church enjoyed his labour), he was helped

to press the truths and threatenings of God so home upon the consciences of his hearers, that it was observed of him, by one of his most learned and pious colleagues, Mr Durham (who is now in glory with him), he did many times cause the hair of their head to stand up. "The Lord was not only hereby verifying his word, "*That he can take the weak things of the world to confound the strong,* "*and out of the mouth of babes can perfect his own praise,* but design- "ing also (as would seem of purpose), to send a boy out of the "school for a reprover of the sluggishness of his people, that thereby "the aged might be the more ashamed, and the younger more a- "fraid." Neither do we think that this was all, but truly when we consider what measure of graces, gifts and experiences, the Lord did bestow upon so young a person, and then with what humility, self-denial, gravity, prudence, diligence, authority, and moderation he was helped to manage these talents during that short time of his ministry: it may be justly conceived that the Lord brought him forth to be a great conviction even to many of us in the ministry, who came into our Master's vineyard long before him, and will go out behind him: and indeed to us it looketh somewhat like the Lord's taking up the little child, and setting him among the midst of his contending disciples in these times, that even they, who would be greatest among us, might be least, and see somewhat of their own weakness.

As to this little piece, whatever ye shall find in it, it hath this to say for itself, that whereas many writings in the world do intrude themselves upon the press; yet this the press hath violently thurst into the world: for some young student, from his good affection to the edification of the Lord's people, and, no doubt, from his high esteem of the precious Author's memory, having given in to the press a copy of some of these sermons, being only notes taken from his mouth when he preached them, no sooner were they seen abroad, but all the presses in the nation fell a labouring about them; so that (if we mistake not) in less than two or three months time, three or four impressions were cast off, yet all of them so imperfect and maimed, that howbeit the excellency of the matter, and the fresh remembrance of the worthy Author's name, made them very sweet to many (especially those who heard him preach) yet the unsuitable dress wherein they appeared, and the mistakes of the first writers (they being hardly able to take up every thing as it was spoken) occasioning divers material failings in the sense, besides lesser faults, could not but be a trouble to those who were acquainted, not only with the singular graces, but parts also of the eminent youth. This gave occasion to some friends to speak a little what way these prejudices, which both the truth and the Author's name might lie under by these incorrect impressions, might be taken off. And finding that the copy, which by providence the worthy young gentlewoman, who was his wife, had lying by her, tho' it was but notes taken from his mouth, yet was the most correct that could be found: and that also did contain the whole purposes that he had preached upon these texts, yea,

the whole purposes concerning faith that he had preached, according to that method purposed in the first of the sermons formerly published. This was undertaken to be revised by some, who, albeit none of the fittest for these employments, yet rather or nothing should be done in the business, were content to bestow some hours upon it, according as other necessary employments would permit. And now having sought out all the notes of these sermons which we could find from other hands, and compared them with the copy above-mentioned, we do again present them to the people, not with any confidence that our pains hath put any effect upon them: only we have some hopes, the whole subject being now before them, and these things in the way of expression helped, which either might seem to be somewhat unpleasant, or liable to mistakes, they shall not now be less edifying, nor less acceptable, than formerly they were. We did not think fit to make any considerable alterations as to the method, or other things of that kind, lest, happily, by straining his excellent purposes too much, to shape them to the ordinary rules, or to reduce them to that order which might have pleased ourselves, we should have wronged the matter itself, at least have put them to a loss who did hear him preach; and it may be now upon their reading things in that same order as they heard them, will be the more readily brought under the impressions of that liveliness, power and weight, which (it may be) formerly they felt upon their hearts when he was speaking.

If the method do not altogether satisfy some spirits, or the explication seem not so full; or if they find some introductions which possibly lead not in so close, or seem not so suitable to the subject of the sermons; or happily now and then there be some little digressions from the main purpose, we shall desire that this may not at all be constructed to be the Author's ignorance of rules and method, or his want of abilities in human learning, it being well known to those who were best acquainted with him, that he indeed had a scholastic spirit, and was in reading far beyond his age and opportunities for studying; but as to all these we shall intreat you rather to consider, 1. His age, and that his gifts were in the very moulding and breaking (as we speak) in the point of order and method, when the Lord was pleased to call him home from his work. 2. That every man hath his proper gift of God, who, in his great wisdom, and certainly for the good of his church, doth so order, that there is somewhat singular and particular almost in every man's way, as to these things. 3. For any thing we know, he had never that high esteem of this or any other of his labours, as to design any of them for public view, and these are but notes taken from his mouth. 4. We are persuaded he studied more his hearers than himself. Ye will easily perceive, when ye have read but a little, that he hath been a man of a very zealous temper, that the great bensil of his spirit, and that which he did wholly spend himself about, was to make people know ther dangerous condition by nature, and by means to persuade them to believe and lay hold upon the great salvation. And truly, that a man,

in such a frame, should less attend to these lesser things, is it not to be wondered at. And, indeed, though these things be good in themselves, and worthy to be looked to in their own place, yet for a minister of the gospel in all auditories, and upon all occasions, to pin up every purpose to such a method, and insist into such a measure of explications and criticisms upon words, it is but to falter himself, and to starve his people. 5. Consider the dulness of the most part of the hearers of this age, and how hard a thing it is to awake a sleeping world, and to get them but to think that it doth concern them to hear in earnest; and possibly it was not a small piece of spiritual wisdom in him, to begin or end all his sermons with an awakening word concerning heaven or hell, or judgment, and the danger of choosing the evil, and refusing the good. 6. For digressions, the truth is, that his soul was filled with such longings after heaven and glory, and so inflamed with the love of Christ, especially towards the latter end of his race, that when he fell on these subjects, upon which (ye will see) most of these digressions are, he could not well contain himself, nor easily bring off his own spirit, a thing not unusual to the saints in scripture: and howbeit such things might seem somewhat singular (in the time) and not so coherent: yet now we have ground to apprehend that they were often strong influences of the Lord's Spirit, stirring up a lamp, as it were, into a sudden blaze, that was not to burn long in his church. But now we shall detain you no longer, only this we may assure you of, that though these sermons are neither so exact, nor so full, as doubtless they would have been, if they had come from the Author's own pen; yet, as we dare say, they were studied with prayer, preached with power, and backed with success; so also, if ye shall read them with consideration, meditate with prayer, and practise with diligence, ye shall neither find your time nor pains ill bestowed; but shall have cause to bless the Lord for this, amongst other helps that he hath given for making you meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. That it may be blest to these ends, is the earnest desire and prayer of your servants in the work of the Lord,

RO. TRAIL.
JO. STIRLING.

THE

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THE

MYSTERY

OF

FAITH

OPENED UP.

SERMON I.

1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son,* JESUS CHRIST, &c.

THIS everlasting gospel (in which there are drawn so many precious draughts and divine lineaments of the transcendent beauty of a crucified Saviour, and of the riches of his unsearchable grace) is a most precious and excellent thing, not only because it doth contain most absolute and sublime precepts and commands, in the exercise and obedience of which we do not only attain unto the highest pitch in holiness, but likewise, because it containeth most rich and precious promises, in the possession and fruition of which we are advanced to the highest pinnacle of eternal blessedness. This is clear in the grace of faith; for what doth more purify the heart, and stamp it with the image of the invisible God, than this grace of faith? And what richer promises are annexed to any duty, than to this duty of believing, to wit, everlasting life, and fruition of God. So that if we dwelt forty days at the foot of mount Sinai, and had been under the greatest discovering and condemning power of the law, we may yet come with boldness to mount Sion, and there embrace Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to such as believe. Upon which mount he standeth, holding forth the golden sceptre of his peace, desiring us to embrace him, and his crying out that word in Isaiah, lxi. i. 'Behold me, behold me'. O! may we not summon angels, and these twenty-four elders about the throne, to help us to wonder that ever

such a command as this came forth, that we should believe on the name of the Son of God, after that we had broken that first and primitive command, 'That we should not eat of the forbidden tree'. Was not this indeed to make mercy rejoice over judgment? And, O! may we not wonder at the precious oath of the everlasting covenant, whereby he hath sworn, 'That he delighted not in the death of sinners?' What (suppose ye) were poor Adam's thoughts, when at the first doctrine of free grace, and of a crucified Christ Jesus a Saviour, was preached unto him in paradise? What a divine surprisal was this, that heaven should have preached peace to earth, after that earth had proclaimed war against heaven? Was not this a low step of condescendency, to behold an offended God preaching peace and good-will to a guilty sinner? What could self-destroying Adam think of these morning and first discoveries of this everlasting covenant? Christ, as it were, in the morning of time, giving vent to that infinite love, which was resting in his bosom and precious heart, before the foundation of the world was laid. We know not whether the infiniteness of his love, the eternity of his love, or the freedom of it, maketh up the greatest wonder; but sure these three, joined together, make up a matchless and everlasting wonder. Would any of you ask the question, what is Christ worth? We could give no answer so suitable as this, it is above all the arithmetic of all the angels in heaven, and all the men on earth, to calculate his worth; all men here must be put to a divine nonplus. This was Job's divinity, Job xxviii. 13 'Man knoweth not the price of wisdom'. And must not Jesus Christ, who is the precious object of faith, and wisdom of the Father, be a supereminent and excellent One, who hath that name, of 'King of kings, and Lord of lords', not only engraven on his vesture (which pointeth out the conspicuousness of his majesty), but even also upon his thigh; to point out, that in all his goings and motions, he proveth himself to be higher than the kings of the earth? And howbeit the naked proposing of the object doth not convert; yet if once our souls are admitted to behold such a sight as Christ in his beauty and majesty, and to be satisfied with the divine rays of his transcendent glory, then certainly we should find a blessed necessity laid upon us of closing with him: for Christ has a sword proceeding out of his precious mouth, by which he doth subject and subjugate his own to himself, as well as he hath a sword girded upon his thigh, by which he judgeth and maketh war with his enemies. We confess it is not only hard, but simply impossible, to commit a hyperbole in commending of him; his worth being always so far above our expressions, and our expressions always far beneath his worth; therefore we

may be put to propose that desire unto him, 'Exalt thyself, O Lord, above the heavens'

But now to our purpose, being at this time to begin our discourse upon that radical and precious grace of faith, we intend to speak of it under this twofold notion and consideration; *First*, We shall speak of it as it is justifying, or, as it doth lay hold upon the righteousness of a crucified Saviour, making application of the precious promises in the covenant of free grace, which we call justifying faith And, in the *Second* place, we shall speak a little unto faith, as it doth lay hold on Christ's strength for the advancing the work of mortification; and doth discover the personal excellencies of Jesus Christ, by which we advance in the work of holiness, and divine conformity with God, which we call sanctifying faith. However, it is not to be supposed, that these are different habits of faith, but different acts flowing from the same saving habit, laying hold and exercising themselves upon Christ in different respects, and for divers ends Now to speak upon the first, we have made choice of these words. The apostle John, in the former verse, hath been pointing out the precious advantages of the grace of obedience, and of keeping his commands, that such a one hath, as it were, an arbitrary power with God, and doth receive many precious returns of prayer. As likewise, that one who is exercised in the grace of repentance, is God's delight: which is included in this, that he doth these things which are well-pleasing in his sight. And now in these words he doth, as it were, answer an objection that might be proposed, about the impossibility of attaining these precious advantages, seeing his commands were so large, and that hardly they could be remembered This he doth sweetly answer, by setting down in this one verse a short compend or breviary both of law and gospel, *viz.* that we should love one another, which is the compend of the law: and that we should believe on the name of his Son; which is the compend of the gospel. And by this he sheweth the Christian, that there are not many things required of him for attaining these excellent advantages; but if he exercise himself in the obedience of these two comprehensive commandments, he shall find favour both with God and man. And as concerning this precious grace of faith, we have, 1. The advantages of it implied in the words, and clear also from the scope, as, no doubt, all the commands have infinite advantages infolded in their bosom, which redounds to a believer by his practising of them And, 2. The excellency of it holden forth in the words, in that it is called his command, as if he had no other command but this (and the Greek particle is here prefixed, which hath a great emphasis and force in it, *kai aute estin entole autou*). But,

3. There is this also, the absolute necessity of this grace, holden forth here in this word, 'His commandment;' as if he would have said, by proposing this command, 'I do set life and death before you.' And that ye would not conceive that it is an arbitrary and indifferent thing to you to believe, or not: but be persuaded of this, that as an infinite advantage may persuade you to the obedience of it; so absolute necessity must persuade you to act that which is of your everlasting concernment. And, lastly, Ye have the precious object upon which faith (which is justifying) doth exercise itself, and that is upon the name of the Son of God. And, no doubt, faith is that excellent grace, which doth elevate the soul into a sweet and inseparable union with Christ: and is that golden and precious knot that doth eternally knit the hearts of these precious friends together. Faith is that grace that draweth the first draughts of Christ's precious image on our hearts, and by love accomplish and perfect them. Now faith doth take hold, not only on the faithfulness of God, that he is a God of truth, and that in him there is no lie; but likewise it taketh hold on the omnipotency of God, that he is one to whom nothing is too hard; and on the infinite mercy and love of God, that he is one who doth delight to magnify this attribute above all his works; and these are the three great pillars of justifying faith. From the *First*, it answereth all these objections of sense, which do ordinarily cry forth, doth his promise fail for evermore? And that with this one word, if he hath once proposed it, he will also do it, and if he hath once spoken it, he will also make it come to pass. From the *Second*, it answereth all these objections that may arise from carnal reason and probability, which tend to the weakness of his confidence. And these do oftentimes cry out, How can these things be; but faith layeth hold on the omnipotency of God, it staggereth not at the promises, but is strong in the faith, giving glory to God. And it is the noble and divine exercise of this heroic grace of faith, that these objections of reason and probability, which it cannot answer, it will lay them aside, and yet close with the promise; which was the practice of believing Abraham, who considered not his own body being weak, nor the barrenness of Sarah's womb. As likewise it was the commendable practice of that woman, Matth. xv. who not being able to answer the second trial of her faith from reason, yet, notwithstanding, faith made her cry out, 'Have mercy upon me, O Son of David.' And from the last, a Christian doth answer all the arguments of misbelief, which do arise from the convictions of our unworthiness and sinfulness, which makes us oftentimes embrace that divinity of Peter's, Luke v. 8. 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.' But faith, taking hold on the infinite

mercy and love of Christ, it answereth all with this, He walks not with us according to that rule of merit, but according to that precious and golden rule of love and boundless compassion.

But before we shall speak any thing unto you of these things, we would a little point out some few things, to be known as previous to these, we shall not dwell long in pointing out the nature of justifying faith: it is that grace, whereby a Christian, being convinced of his lost estate, and of an utter impossibility to save himself, he doth flee to the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and unto him who is that precious city of refuge, and there doth abide till our high-priest shall die, which shall not be for ever; or, if ye will, it is a sweet travelling of the immortal soul, betwixt infinite misery, and infinite mercy; betwixt an utter impossibility to save ourselves, and a complete ability in him to save to the uttermost; betwixt abounding sin, and superabounding mercy. Hence faith is often holden forth to us in scripture, under that notion of coming, Isa. lv. 1. 'Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.' Rev. xxii. 17. 'Whosoever will, let him take the waters of life freely.' Heb. vii. 25. 'Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come to God by him.' And we may say, by the way, that if once a sinner could be brought to this, to count all his own righteousness but filthy rags, and to believe that a man is as really justified before God by imputed righteousness, as if it were by inherent holiness; surely such an one were not far from the kingdom of God. Neither shall we stand long to point out this unto you, that it is your duty to believe; for it is clear from this place, and likewise from Isa. xlv. 22. 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' Matth. xi. 28. 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' John xiv. 1. Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' Isa. lv. 1. 'Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come, buy, without money, and without price.' But O! it is a great misery of many (and that which may be a subject of perpetual lamentation) that we can neither be subject to the law, as commanded to obey it, or as threatening to believe it: nor to the gospel, as promising to embrace it, and sweetly to receive it. O! but that primitive temptation and delusion, whereby Satan did deceive our first father, is that whereby he yet seeks to catch and delude many souls, viz. that though we eat of the forbidden fruit, and walk in the vain imaginations of our own hearts, yet he doth suggest this to us, That we shall not die, but shall once be as God; this is Satan's great and deluding divinity. And therefore, to enforce this great and precious command a little further, we shall propose these considerations.

First, That the gospel hath laid no obstructions in our way of closing with Christ, and partaking of the effects of the gospel; but, on the contrary, sheweth that the great impediment is our want of willingness which we lay in our own way; as is clear from John v. 40 'Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life;' as likewise from Rev. xxii. 17. where the gates of the gospel are cast open, and 'whosoever will' are commanded to enter in: so that, although you may father your misbelief upon your inability, or that your spot is not the spot of his people, yet know, that the rise and original of it, is want of willingness. But to make this more clear, we would have you all know this, that all the qualifications annexed to this commandment of faith, as that in Matth xi 28. speaketh out the qualifications rather of these that will come, than all those that ought to come; or he inviteth these, that through the spirit of discouragement and misbelief have the greatest reluctancy to come; and may not that cardinal and soul-refreshing promise, John vi. 37 stop the mouth of misbelief, so that it should have nothing to say? 'He that cometh unto me, I will in no ways cast out;' ye may reduce your misbelief rather to the sinfulness of your will, than to the sinfulness of your walk, and if once ye would come the length of willingness to embrace Jesus Christ, all other objections and knots should be sweetly loosed and dissolved.

Secondly, Consider, that though we should pray the one half of our time, and weep the other, yet if we want this noble grace of faith, the wrath of God shall abide on us. What are all the works of these hypocrites, and these glistering acts of law sanctification, but a plunging ourselves in the ditch, until our own clothes abhor us? Therefore it is, that after the prophet Zechariah hath made mention, in the 12th chapter of his prophesy, of making bitter lamentation 'for him whom we have pierced, as for an only son;' yet in the beginning of the 13th chapter, he maketh mention of 'a fountain opened to the house of David for sin and for uncleanness;' which may intimate unto us, that although we have washed ourselves with our own tears, yet there is use of the blood of Christ, and that we must be washed in that fountain, even for our own righteousness, which are but as filthy rags.

Thirdly, Consider that great and monstrous sinfulness that is in this sin of unbelief; we must strain at a gnat, but we will easily swallow down this camel; we will tithe mint and anise, and fast twice in the week, but neglect faith, and love, and judgment, which are the weightier things of the law. And indeed there are these things which speak out the sinfulness of unbelief: 1. That when the Holy Ghost is sent to convince the world of

sin, John xvi. 9. he pitched upon this sin, as although there were no other sin of which the world had need to be convinced, 'He will convince the world of sin, because they believe not on the Son of God;' and no doubt there is more sinfulness in that sin, than in any branch of the moral law, it being a sin against a matchless love, and against that which is the remedy of sin. 2. That it is called, by way of eminency, disobedience; as is clear from Hebrews iv. 11. 'Lest any of you fall after the same example of unbelief;' or as the word may be rendered, lest any of you fall after that example of disobedience Eph. ii. 3. That amongst all these that shall be eternally excommunicated from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, those that are guilty of this sin of unbelief, they are put in the first place. Rev. xxi. 8. And, 4. That unbelief doth contradict and deny these three precious and cardinal attributes of God; 1. Doth not unbelief contradict his faithfulness, and make him a liar? 1 John v. 10 Doth it not contradict the infiniteness of his power. And, 3d The infiniteness of his love, and supposeth that there is something too hard for him, which his power cannot reach, nor his infinite love overcome? We may reduce many of our questions and disputings of his good will to this original, viz. to the disputings of his power. No doubt, if we belong to him, we shall once sing that note of lamentation over our unbelief, That is our infirmity, for changes are from the right hand of the Most High.

And, *Lastly*, To enforce this precious command of faith, consider that it is his command which speaketh forth this, that we must not take an indulgence or dispensation to ourselves to believe or not to believe at our pleasure; and is it not a strange thing, that Christians are less convinced of the breaches of the commandments of faith, than of other commands? They think misbelief to be but a Zoar, a little sin; and it proceedeth either from this, that the conviction of other sins (as the neglect of prayer, or the sin of swearing, or committing adultery) do arise from a natural conscience; for there is something of nature's light to make us abominate and hate them: when yet the light of nature will not lead us to the conviction of the sinfulness of misbelief, it being a gospel and more spiritual sin. Or it proceedeth from this, that unbelief doth ordinarily pass valid under the vizard of some refined virtue, as humility and tenderness, though that rather it may be said, that it is pride and ignorance, clothed with the garments of humility. And, no doubt, Christ doth account obedience to this commandment of faith the greatest act of humility; as is clear from Rom. x. 3. where it is called submission; 'They submitted not to the righteousness of God.'

Or else it proceedeth from this, that we conceive that the commandment of faith is not of so large extent as other commands, and so doth not bind us to the obedience of it; but know this, that it will be the condemnation of the world, that they have not believed on the name of the Son of God; and no doubt but it is Satan's great design and cardinal project, to keep us back from obedience to the commandment of faith, and that we should not listen to the precious promises of his everlasting gospel, but should reject the counsel of God against ourselves, and refuse his precious and divine call.

The *Second* precious consideration that we would give, shall be to show you what are the causes that there is so much disputing of our interest, and so little believing; that we are so unstable as water, marring our own excellency, spending so much of our time in walking under a cloud, and are so seldom admitted to read our names in these precious and eternal records of heaven? No doubt these things have influence upon it, viz. 1. That we are more judging of God by his dispensations, than by his word, supposing ever the change of his dispensations to speak forth the change of our state; this is misbelief's divinity, that when sense cannot read love in his face, but he appeareth to frown, and to cast a cloud over it, then it is presumption (saith sense) to read love in his heart, or in his word; but know it was a self-denying practice of believing Job to cry out, 'Though he should kill me, yet will I believe in him;' therefore make not dispensations your Bible; otherwise ye will stumble at noon-tide of the day, and shall halt in your way; knew ye never what such a thing as this meaneth, to ascend overcoming thoughts of his love, notwithstanding any thing that his dispensations might preach? We conceive, that if the eyes of our faith were opened, we might see infinite love engraven on the darkest acts, and most dismal like dispensations of his to us; though it be oftentimes written in dark and dim characters of sense.

2. There is this likewise, which hath influence upon our so much disputing and misbelieving, viz. a guilty conscience, and the entertainment of some predominant lust, which oftentimes occasioneth our walking in darkness, and having no light This is clear from 1 Tim. ii. 19. where that precious jewel of faith can be holden in no other place, but in a pure conscience, that is that royal place wherein it must dwell; and no doubt, if once we make shipwreck of a good conscience, we will err concerning our faith. A bosom idol, when it is entertained, doth exceedingly mar the vigorous exercises of these graces, which are evidences of our faith, and certainly grace rather in its degrees, than in its sincerity or simple being only, is that which giveth

the clear evidence of faith. Therefore, when we find not love in its height and eminent actings, we hardly win to make it any way clearly concluding demonstration of our faith.

3. As likewise a bosom idol, when it is entertained, maketh us to lose much of our high esteem and reputation of Jesus Christ, which doth exceedingly interrupt the sweet and precious actings of faith. For it is certain, that if once the immortal soul be united to Jesus Christ by the bond of love and respect, then our faith will increase with the increase of God. Our entertainment to a bosom-idol is ordinarily punished with the want of the sensible intimations of his grace, and of our interest in him; so that sometimes his own are constrained to cry out, 'God hath departed from me, and he answereth me not, neither by dreams nor visions.'

4. There is that likewise, that hath influence upon it, our not closing absolutely with Jesus Christ, but upon conditions and suppositions. We make not an absolute and blank resignation of ourselves over unto Christ, to hold fast the covenant, notwithstanding he would dispense both bitter and sad things to us; but we conceive that Christ's covenant with believers is like that covenant that God made with Noah, that there should be summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, night and day, unto a Christian. A Christian must have his night as well as his day; he must once sow in tears, before he reap in joy: he must once go forth bearing his precious seed, before he can return bearing his sheaves in his bosom: and that this hath influence upon our instability, may be seen from this, that often a Christian, after his first closing with Christ, he meeteth with desertion in point of tenderness, in point of joy, and in point of strength; so that his corruption seems now to be awakened more than formerly, that he wants those seeming enjoyments of him which formerly he had, and that much of his softness of heart hath now evanished, which is clear somewhat from Heb. x 32. 'And after they were enlightened, they endured a great fight of afflictions;' for the word there rendered afflictions, signifieth inward troubles through the motions of sin, as well as outward afflictions, Gal. v. 24. And God useth to dispense this way to his own, not only to make trial of the sincerity of our closing with him, but to make our faith more stedfast and sure. And no doubt, if we close not absolutely with Christ (when under these temptations and trials), we must reject our confidence as a delusion, and suppose it to be as a morning dream: therefore it were a noble and divine practice of a Christian, to close with Christ without reservation, seeing he doth dispense nothing but that which might tend to our advantage. And we

would say to such as are under these temptations, that if ye endeavour to resist them, it is the most compendious and excellent way to make your hearts, which now are dying as a stone, to be as 'a watered garden, and as springs of water, whose waters fail not, and to make you strong as a lion, so that no temptation can rouse you up; but ye shall be enabled to tread upon the high places of the earth, and to sing songs of triumph over your idols

5. There is this likewise that hath influence on it, our building of our faith more upon sense than upon Christ or his word; and therefore it is that faith is so inconstant and changeable as the moon, we not knowing what such a thing meaneth to hope against hope: and to be strong in faith, giving glory to God. And we would only say unto you, that erect your confidence upon so sandy a foundation, that when the wind and storm of temptation shall blow, that house shall fall to the ground. As likewise building of your faith upon sense, doth abate much of your joy, and much of your precious esteem of Jesus Christ; it being faith exercising itself upon an invisible object, that maketh the Christian 'to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' 1 Peter i. 8.

6. There is this last that hath influence upon it, even our slothfulness in the exercise of our spiritual duties, by which faith should be entertained. Faith is a tender grace, and a plant that must not be ruffled, but nourished through the sap of other precious graces; but we grow remiss in our spiritual duties, and do turn ourselves upon the bed of security, as the door upon the hinges; and doth not our drowziness clothe us with rags, and make us fall into a deep sleep; while as if we were diligent, our soul should be made fat and rich? Yea, slothfulness doth not only impede assurance in this, that it hindereth the divine communication of his love and respect by which assurance may be kept in life, Cant. v. 2. 'But also it maketh our poverty come on us as an armed man, and our want as one that travelleth:' and withal, it letteth loose the chain by which our corruptions are tied, and maketh them to lift up their heads, for which our assurance is much darkened and impaired, and our hope is much converted into diffidence and despair. And we would only say this, it is the diligent Christian that is the believing Christian, and is the diligent Christian; there being such a sweet reciprocation betwixt these two precious graces, that they die and live together.

Now, *Thirdly*, We shall shut up our discourse with this, in pointing out a little, what are those things that do obstruct a Christian's closing with Christ, and believing in his precious name.

I. We conceive that this woful evil doth spring and rise from that fundamental ignorance of this truth, that there is a God; as is clear from Heb xi. 6. where that is required as a qualification of a comer, that he should believe that God is: and assuredly till once this precious truth be imprinted upon our souls as with a pen of iron, and a point of a diamond, we will look upon the gospel as an Utopian fancy, and a deluding notion, to teach unstable souls, who know not the way to attain unto real blessedness; and truly it is a fault in many, that they begin to dispute their being in Christ, before they know there is a Christ, as to dispute their interest in him before his being, and that there is such an one as is called Christ.

II. Our coming unto Christ is obstructed from the want of the real and spiritual convictions of our desperate and lost estate without Jesus Christ, and that our unspeakable misery is the want of him; which is clear from Jer. ii. 31. 'We are lords, we will come no more to thee.' And it is evident from Rev. iii. 16, 18. that such a delusion as this doth overtake many, that they can reign as kings without Jesus Christ; and that they can build their happiness, and establish their eternal felicity, upon another foundation. But, O! that we could once win to this, to believe what we are without Christ, and to believe what we shall be in the enjoyment of him, with the one eye to discern and look upon these deep draughts that the mystery of iniquity hath imprinted upon our immortal souls; and withal to reflect upon the wages of sin, which is death, and be constrained to cry, 'Wo is me, for I am undone;' and with the other eye, to ascend and look to that help that is laid upon 'one that is mighty,' and to make use of the righteousness of a crucified Saviour, that so what we want in ourselves, we may get it abundantly made up in him.

III. There is this likewise that obstructeth our closing with Christ, our too much addictedness to the pleasures and carnal delights of a passing world, which is clear from Luke xiv. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, Matth. xxii. 5, 6. where those that are invited to come to the feast of this gospel, they do make their apology, and with one consent do refuse it, some pretending an impossibility to come, and some pretending an unavoidable inconveniency in coming. And, O! what a ridiculous thing is that poor compliment, that these deluded sinners used to Christ, 'I pray you have us excused?' And is not the world the great plea and argument that they make use of, when they will come and make use of Christ?

IV. There is this, lastly, which doth obstruct one's coming to Christ, their unwillingness to be denied to their own right-

cousness; which is clear from Rom. x. 23. And we conceive, if once these two were believed (which are the great topics out of which all these arguments may be brought to persuade you to embarce Christ) to wit, the infinite excellency of his person on whom we are to believe, and the infinite lose that those do sustain who shall be eternally rejected of him. We might be persuaded to entertain a divine abstractness, and holy retirement from all things that are here below, and to pitch our desires alone upon him, 'Who is the everlasting wonder of angels, and the glory of the higher house.' O! did we once suppose the unspeakable happiness of those, whose faith is now advanced unto everlasting felicity and fruition, and hath entered into that eternal possession of the promises, might we not be constrained to cry out, 'It is good for us once to be there?' Christ weepeth to us in the law, but we do not lament; and he pipeth to us in the gospel, but we do not dance: he is willing to draw us 'with the cords of men, and with the bonds of love, and yet we will not have him to reign over us.' May not angels laugh at our folly, that we should so undervalue this Prince of love, and should contemn him who is holden in so high esteem and reverence in these two great assemblies that are above, of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect? Christ hath now given us the first and second summons, the day is approaching when the sad and woful summons shall be sent against us, of departing from him into these everlasting flames, out of which there is no redemption: and this shall be the cap-stone of our misery, that we had once life in offer, but did refuse it; and though there were four gates standing open towards the north, by which we might have entered into that everlasting rest, yet we choose rather 'to walk in the paths that lead down to death, and take hold of the chambers of hell.' O but there are many that think the gospel cunningly devised fables and foolishness (they being unwilling to believe that which sense cannot comprehend, nor reason reach), and this is the reason why the gospel is not embraced, but is rejected as an human invention, and as a morning dream, &c.

SERMON II.

1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that you should believe on the name of his Son,* JESUS CHRIST, *&c.*

THERE are three great and cardinal mysteries, in the unfolding of which all a Christian's time ought to be spent; *First*,

There is that precious and everlasting mystery of Christ's love and condescendency, which these intellectual spirits, the angels, are not able fully to comprehend. *Secondly*, There is that woful mystery of the desperate deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart, which no man was ever yet able to fathom and comprehend. And, *Thirdly*, There is that precious mystery of that eternal felicity and blessedness that is purchased unto the saints, that once they shall reign with Christ, not a thousand years only, but throughout all the ages of everlasting and endless eternity: so that there is this difference betwixt this garden of everlasting delight that Christ hath purchased to the saints, and that first paradise, and Eden wherein man was placed. There was a secret gate in the first, through which a man that had once entered in, might go out again. But in the second and precious Eden, there is no access for going out: and all that is to be known of these three mysteries is much comprehended in this, to know that they cannot fully be known. Paul was a blessed proficient in the study of the first mystery, and had almost attained to the highest class of knowledge, and yet he is constrained to profess himself to be ignorant of this. Hence is that word, Eph. iii 19. 'That ye may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge'. And is it not a mysterious command, to desire people to know that which cannot be known? The meaning whereof we conceive to be this in part, that Paul pressed this upon them, that they should study to know that this mystery of Christ's love could not be known. Jeremiah was a blessed proficient in the knowledge and study of the second mystery; he had some morning and twilight discoveries of that, and though in some measure he had fathomed that deep, yet he is constrained to cry out, chap. xvii. ver. 9. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and 'desperately wicked, who can know it?' And indeed that which Solomon saith of kings, Prov. xxv. 3. may well be said of all men in this respect, 'The heavens for height, and the earth for 'depth, and the heart of man is unsearchable.' The apostle Paul also was a blessed proficient in the study of the third mystery, having some morning and twilight discoveries of the promised rest, and was once caught up to the third heaven; and yet when he is beginning to speak of it, 1 Cor. ii. 9 he declared all men to be ignorant of the knowledge of this profound mystery of the mans blessedness, and cried out, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, 'neither hath it entered into the heart of man, to conceive the 'things which God hath prepared for them that love him:' and if there be any thing further to be known of these mysteries, the grace of faith is found worthy, amongst all the graces of the Spirit, to open the seven seals of these great depths of God. Is

not the grace of faith that whereby a Christian doth take up the invisible excellency and virtue of a dying Christ? Is not faith that precious grace, by which a Christian must take the spots and blemishes that are within himself? And is not the grace of faith that precious grace that placeth a Christian upon the top of mount Pisgah, and there letteth him see a sight of the promised land, and doth open a door in heaven through which a Christian is admitted to see Christ sitting upon his throne? And faith hath not only a kind of omnipotency, as is clear, 'that 'all things are possible to him that believeth.' but it hath a kind of omnisciency, and all knowledge, that it can take up, and comprehend all the great mysteries of heaven, according to that word, Prov. xxviii. 5 'He that seeketh the Lord, shall under-'stand all things;' as if he had said, there is nothing dark to a believing Christian, as there is nothing impossible to a believing Christian. As likewise, faith is that grace that must take aside the vail that is spread over the face of a crucified Christ: and faith is that precious spy, that goeth forth and taketh up these wonderful exercises that are in him. The grace of love, as it were, is born blind; and it hath nothing wherewith to solace itself, but that which is presented unto it by this noble and excellent grace of faith.

Now, before we shall speak any thing to these things, that we did propose to speak of at the last occasion, we shall yet speak a little unto some things, which are necessary to be known for the distinct uptaking of the nature of justifying faith, which is the great commandment of this everlasting gospel; and that which we would first speak to, shall be this, what is the reason and ground, that the gospel-conveyance of righteousness and life (and of the excellent things of this everlasting covenant) should be through the exercise of the grace of faith? For it is not said in the scripture, that repentance justifieth, that love justifieth, or that mortification justifieth; but it is faith only that justifieth, and it is faith by which a Christian inheriteth the promises; so that it is clear, that faith is that conduit-pipe, thro' which are conveyed to us the great blessings of this everlasting covenant.

I. And the first ground of it is this, it is through faith that all our blessings may be known to be by love, and by free and unsearchable grace; as is clear, Rom. iv. 16. while the apostle is giving a reason, why the inheritance is conveyed to a Christian through faith; 'It is of faith' (saith he) 'that it might be by grace;' for if the inheritance were conveyed to a Christian through a covenant of works, then these spotless draughts of infinite love and unsearchable grace, should not be written on our inheri-

tance; as is clear, Rom. iv. 25. And it is that great design of Christ, to make his grace conspicuous, in conveying salvation to us through faith.

II. There is this second ground likewise of it, that all the promises and blessings of this everlasting covenant might be sure and stedfast to us, therefore they are conveyed to us through the exercise of the grace of faith; as is clear, Rom. iv. 16. 'They are of faith' (saith he) 'that they may be sure:' or, as the word is, that they might be settled, when the promises of life and eternal salvation were conveyed to us through man's obedience, were they not then most uncertain and unstable: but is not heaven your everlasting crown now stedfast unto you, seeing you have that golden pillar of Christ's everlasting righteousness to be the foundation of your faith, and the strength of your confidence in the day of need?

III. There is the third ground why the promises, and excellent things of this gospel, are conveyed to a Christian through the exercise of faith, that all boasting and glorying might be excluded, according to that word, Rom. iii. 27. 'By what law is boasting excluded? Not by the law of works, but by the law of faith.' And certainly, seeing Christians have all the great things of heaven conveyed to them through the exercise of faith: think ye not, that this shall be your first song when ye shall be within the gates of the new Jerusalem? 'Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thee doth belong the glory of our salvation.' O! what a precious dignity were it, but for one half hour to be admitted to hear these spotless songs that are sung by these thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy angels, that are round about his throne? Doth not David, that sweet singer of Israel, now sing more sweetly than he did when he was here below? Doth not deserted Heman now chant forth the praises and everlasting songs of him that sitteth upon the throne? And doth not afflicted Job now sing sweetly after his captivity reduced, and he entered within that land, where the voice of joy and gladness is continually heard: would you have a description of heaven! I could not give it any term so suitable as this, heaven is a rest without a rest, for though there remains a rest for the righteous, yet Rev iv. 8. 'These four beasts that stand before the throne, they rest not day nor night, crying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty:' yet there is much divine quietness in that holy quietness that is above.

IV. There is this last ground, why the blessings of the gospel, and life, and righteousness are conveyed to us through the exercise of faith, that the way to attain these things might be pleasant and easy. We are certainly persuaded, that the way of

winning to heaven by a covenant of works, was much more unpleasant and difficult; but is it not an easy way of entering into the holy of holies, to win into it through the exercise of faith? Are not all wisdom's ways pleasantness? Are not all her paths peace? Was not that just self-denial in one that said, he would not take up a crown though it were lying at his foot? But, oh! that cursed self-denial doth possess the breasts of many, so that, though that crown of immortal glory and eternal blessedness be lying at our feet, yet we will not embrace it, nor take it up? Is not the hatred of many to Christ covered with deceit. And therefore your iniquities shall be declared before the congregation.

Now that what we have spoken unto this, might be more clear, and that the nature of justifying faith be not mistaken, we would have you taking notice of these things.

I. That the grace of faith doth not justify a Christian, as it is a work; or because of any inherent excellency and dignity that is in this grace above any other graces of the Spirit; but faith doth alone justify a Christian instrumentally, and objectively; that is, it is that by which a Christian is just, by laying hold on the precious object of it, the righteousness of Christ. And to clear this, we would only have you knowing this, that faith doth justify as it closeth with Christ, but not because it closeth with Christ, which some vainly are bold to assert, because there is not any dignity or worth in the act of faith in closing with Christ that can be the foundation of our justification, else it were to confound that precious degree of free grace.

II. There is this, that we would have you all knowing, that faith is not the instrument of justification (as sanctification is taken in an active sense) though it is the instrument of justification, as it is taken in a passive sense; and the ground of this conclusion is this, because it is impossible, that any action in man, can be an instrument in any action in God; and therefore that phrase that yon have so ordinarily spoken of, That faith justifieth, it is thus to be resolved, That we are justified by faith.

III. There is this that we would have you knowing, that betwixt a Christians closing by faith with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and the justification of a sinner, I say there is no natural and indispensible connection of divine appointment and of free grace, though we conceive there is a natural aptitude in the grace of faith, to lay hold on the righteousness of Christ, more than there is in any other grace of the Spirit; as ye may see, there is a more natural aptitude and fitness in the hand to receive, than in any other organ of the body.

IV. There is this also that we would have you knowing, that

is, a Christian in his first closing with Christ (considered as crucified) is the immediate object of his faith, and not Christ considered in his personal excellencies. Hence it is often in scripture, that Christ, as crucified, is holden forth as the immediate object of justifying faith; as is clear, Rom. iii. 5, 24, 26. And the ground of this assertion is this, because that is the formal object of justifying faith, which doth formally justify the sinner, and on which faith doth immediately lay hold as a ransom to satisfy justice, and as a righteousness, in which the soul dare venture to be found, when it shall stand before the judgment-seat of God: and certainly this is Christ, as obedient to the death of the cross. And it is likewise clear, that the thing which doth engage the soul to Christ, is not only because he is good in himself, but because he is good to us.

V. And there is this, lastly, That we would have you knowing, that though faith doth alone justify, yet faith doth not justify, being alone: hence is that which we have so often in schools, *fides justificate solum, licet non solitarie.* That faith justifieth alone, though not being alone: as James doth speak, 'faith without works is dead,' and is of none effect.

Now that which, secondly, we shall speak to, shall be this, To point out to you some differences betwixt justifying faith, which is in a real believer, and temporary faith, which is in an hypocrite, and one that is destitute of that, is destitute of everlasting hope, though he pretend to have it.

And first, That there is such a thing as temporary faith, is clear from Luke viii. 13. It is said there of some, that they believed for a season; yea, in Acts viii. 13. it is said of Simon Magus ('who was in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity'), he believed; and those in John ii. 23. when they did behold the miracles, they believed on Jesus Christ, and yet we perceive that their faith was not sincere, and so this was not saving faith. And indeed ye may see a difference betwixt these two in the name temporary; for this is such a faith, as doth not continue long with him that hath it, but doth evanish and pass away; for as this is certain, 'That an hypocrite will not always call upon God,' Job. xxvii 10. so that is also certain, that an hypocrite will not always believe in God. I tell you, that the longest time that an hypocrite doth keep his faith, Job hath set down in his xviiith chap. verse 14. 'Their hope,' (saith he) 'shall bring them to the king of terrors, and then it shall be rooted out of them, and their tabernacle,' their faith will bring them no further than the gates of death, and then their faith will fly away as a dream, and evanish as a vision of the night.

II. There is this difference likewise betwixt them, that tem-

porary faith closeth with Christ as a Saviour, and for righteousness, but it closeth not with Christ as a Prince, and for sanctification: but justifying faith taketh Christ as well for a Prince, as it taketh him for a Saviour: and if Solomon did discern who was the true mother of the child, by that, that she who would have the child divided was not the mother of the child; so we may say, that they who would divide Christ in his offices, it is an evidence that they are not amongst those who are actually made partakers of the adoption of children; there is somewhat of this pointed at in John vi. 60. where that which made many, who were his disciples (and did once believe) desert him, was because of the hardness of his commands, 'This is a hard saying, who can bear it?' And it is certain, that it is a greater difficulty for a Christian to take Christ as a Prince, than as a Saviour; for by that he must make an absolute resignation of himself over to Christ never to be reduced. O! when saw you such a sight of Christ, that you were constrained to cry out (without a compliment) to him, 'Truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant? Or were you never ravished with one of his eyes, nor overtaken with one chain of his neck? believe me, they who see him, do believe that his commands are not grievous.

III. There is this difference, that temporary faith is attained unto without the exercise of the law; but justifying faith is not attained to without some measure of the exercise of the law: this is clear, Mark iv. 5. where, speaking of these temporary believers, it is said of them, 'the fruit immediately sprang up, &c.' Are there not some (it may be here) who think they do believe; and yet were never in any measure trembling under the discovering and condemning power of the law? Is not that a mystery, that one should bring forth without travailing? And is not this a mystery in Christianity, that one should believe before he hath found the pangs of the new birth? I am afraid of this, that many of us hath taken up our religion at our foot; for there are many that take up religion before religion take them up. But would ye know the properties of a Christian's faith? It is a begotten faith, 1 Pet. i. 2. and not a faith that is taken up at our pleasure; and I would only say these two things to you; be persuaded of this, that hypocrisy may be spun with a very small thread, so that the most discerning Christian cannot take up that desperate enmity that is in them. How long did Judas lurk under the name of a saint, even with those that were most discerning? And there is that we would say, that among all these 'that shall be eternally excommunicate from 'the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,' hypocrites in Sion shall have the bitterest cup of divine indignation presented unto them. Hence it is, that Christ, when he

would tell the worst company that one should have in hell, it is always this, ye shall go to that place where hypocrites and sinners are: and so it would be of your concernment, that by the candle of the Lord you will search the inward parts of the belly, before ye go down to the grave with a lie in your right hand: a deceiving heart having turned you aside. We confess it is sad to consider these anxious disappointments that many in these days shall once meet with.

IV. But there is this last difference betwixt justifying faith and temporary faith, That there are three precious effects of justifying faith, which a temporary believer cannot win to.

1 To be denied to all his enjoyments and attainments, and walk humbly under them; for we may see that it is impossible for an hypocrite to be denied to his enjoyments, he maketh such a deity of them, and worships them, or rather he worshippeth himself in them. There are three grea graces that an hypocrite doth pursue after (though he rather seeketh them as gifts than as graces), knowledge, prayer, and humility: and though it be but little that he can attain of any of the three (or rather nothing in a saving way), yet least of all can he attain to the last; yea, we may judge that there is always within his bosom a standing conviction that he could never win to that grace of humility. O! could you never win to this, to count your own righteousness as filthy rags, and to rejoice alone in the righteousness of a crucified Saviour? I would press this upon you by the way (O Christians of this generation), forget your perfections, and remember your imperfections; have a holy oblivion of your attainments, but have a divine remembrance of your short-comings: look more to what is before unperfected, than what is behind, and thus shall you evidence true justifying faith.

2. It is an effect of justifying faith to be under some constant and divine impressions of the preciousness of Jesus Christ, according to that word, 1 Pet. ii. 7, 'To you who believe, Christ is precious.' It is not said, that Christ was precious, or shall be precious, but it is said, 'He is precious;' which doth import (as we use to speak) a continued act. Did you never know what it was to dwell twenty-four hours under the impression of the matchless excellency and precious worth of a crucified Saviour? I will pose you with this, are there not some here, and elsewhere, that pass under the notion of saints, that never knew what it was to dwell half an hour under these high and elevating thoughts of the preciousness of Jesus Christ? So that we profess, we cannot tell whether we shall call him precious or undervalued; but we may conjoin these two names together, that he is precious, and yet an undervalued Christ.

3. By true justifying faith, a Christian winneth to mortification of his invisible and predominant lusts, which is impossible for a temporary believer to win to. And is there not a great difference betwixt an idol when it is cast out, and an idol when it goeth out? I will tell you the great mortification of hypocrites, the devil was living in them, as one that was a black one, and now he cometh again and transformeth himself into an angel of light: he was living in them before by the spirit of profanity, and now he liveth in them by the spirit of hypocrisy, and counterfeiting of these things that were never clear attainments, while it is the dignity of faith, Acts xv. 9. 'to purify the heart.' But are there not many here, who never knew what it was to mortify one lust for Christ? Can such a delusion overtake you, O atheists! that ye shall reign with Christ, if ye die not with him? There is an opinion vented in these days, that there may be repentance in heaven; and I think it would seem, that the Christians of this age have much of that opinion, we are so little in repentance while we are here below; but know that faith and sanctification are two inseparable companions: and let me tell you, if ye would know the compend of the precious exercise of faith, it is this, faith hath three great things that it perpetually contemplates and views. 1. Faith looketh to the promise, and there it doth rejoice and rest upon it. 2 Faith looketh to the duties that are commanded, and there it crieth out, 'Here I am, I will obey and hearken to the voice of thy word.' And, 3. Faith looketh to the crown, and there it doth exult and sweetly rejoice in divine expectations. And O! what a light is that, to behold that everlasting Prince standing at the end of our race, having a crown in his right hand, with this motto engraven on it, 'He that persevereth to the end shall be saved.' And what a faith, suppose ye, shall it be thought, when we shall get on that immortal crown of blessedness? What think ye is the exercise of those that are above? O! heaven, heaven. If we did know it, would we not be in an holy extasy of desire till we were there? And blessed be he eternally, that hath purchased that precious felicity to us.

Now we shall, at this time, shut up our discourse, by speaking a little to these things in which a Christian doth ordinarily meet with assurance of his interest in God, and is put to the divine actings of the grace of faith, for there are some sealing times to a Christian.

I. The first time of the sealing is, after the mortification of some predominant lust and idol, when they are admitted to read their names in these precious and ancient records of hea-

ven, and to see (in these books) their own unworthy names written by the hand of that everlasting Prince. This is clear, Rev. ii. 17. 'To him that overcometh, will I give a white stone, and in it a new name written, that no man knows saving he that receiveth it:' and from that, 2 Tim. iv 8 Believe me, more mortification would make more believing; but would ye know the original of misbelief; it is the want of the exercise of spiritual mortification of our lusts. I know not where the most part of us intendeth to lodge at night, but this is certain, that we live with much contentment with our lusts, and these predominant idols, that do so much possess us.

II. It is really a sealing time to a Christian, when he is admitted to the divine enjoyment of these satisfying delights that are to be found in Christ; whence was it that the spouse cried out so often, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his?' Was it not when she was brought to the banqueting house, and his banner over her was love? Believe me, more communion with an absent Christ would make more intimation (in a divine manner) of our peace with him. We desire to bless thoss that are above the reach of all these disputings and questions that we are so much subject unto.

III. This is a sealing time to a Christian, when he is much in the exercise of secret prayer, and of much conversing, and corresponding with God in that duty; as is clear from that word in Daniel, xi. 21. When Daniel was praying at the evening oblation, in the verse 23. he meets with a divine intimation, that is, peace with God. O man, greatly beloved of God, as the original hath it, O man of great desires, for he was desirable indeed, and precious to him who holdeth the saints in his right hand.

IV. This also is a sealing time to a Christian, when he is called to the exercise of some great work, and is to be put upon some eminent holy employment. This is clear from Jer. i. 5. where Jeremiah, being called to preach the gospel unto such a rebellious people, then he hath his eternal election declared unto him; 'Before thou wast formed in the womb, I knew thee.' Christ, as it were, giveth them that, to be meat to them for forty days, and that, in the strength of it, they may go many a day's journey.

V. There is also another sealing time, when a Christian is first begotten to a precious and everlasting hope; for when at first Christians began to be acquainted with Christ, even then sometimes he declareth to them his boundless and everlasting love. And this is the ground why some of these, who are but babes in Christ, are so much in the exercise of diligence, so much in

the exercise of the grace of love, and so much in the exercise of the grace of tenderness, it is even because of the solemn impression of their interest in Christ; that, as it were, they are daily taken in to read their own names in legible letters in the Lamb's book of life.

VI. And there is this last time, that is a sealing time to a Christian, and that is, when he is put under some sad afflicting dispensation; 'When the furnace is heated seven times more than ordinary,' then doth God condescend to manifest himself to his own. When was it that John met with most of the revelations of heaven? was it not when he was 'in the isle of Patmos for the testimony of Jesus Christ's kingdom, and patience of our blessed Lord?' Rev. i. 9. And in that place, 2 Cor. iv. 6. 'Though our outward man decay, yet our inward man is renewed day by day.'

Now we would press you to be more serious in the exercise of this precious grace. And I shall tell you the compend of Christianity in these words, 1. By faith to solace yourselves in Christ's invisible virtues and excellencies. And, 2. By hope, to be viewing that precious crown, and those everlasting dignities that are to be given to the saints. And, 3. By mortification, to be crucifying your idols. And, 4. By patience, to be possessing your souls, until once you shall pass through the dark land to that valley of everlasting delight. And as for those that contemn and undervalue the blood of this everlasting covenant (and I would have all those that delight not with closing with Christ, and those who have not misbelief as their cross, to consider this) 'the wrath of the living and eternal God doth abide upon them who do not believe; according to the word, John iii. 36. 'He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him;' it is a remarkable phrase, because of this the wrath of God will not be as a pilgrim to a misbeliever, and will turn aside to tarry but for a night, but the wrath of God (to them that will not believe) shall be their household companion, and shall dwell with them; and woe, woe to them eternally who have this sad and everlasting companion to abide with them, the wrath of a living God. There is one thing we would have these knowing, that amongst all these who are eternally debarred from Jesus Christ, misbelievers are put in the foremost rank, Rev. xxi. There he is to put away the fearful and unbelieving: and from 2 Thess. i. 18. 'When Christ shall come from heaven with ten thousand of his saints.' (what to do?) 'it is even to execute vengeance on those that obey not the truth of the gospel,' that is, who do not believe. And I pose your own hearts with this, whether or not your names be written there in that roll, amongst those that shall be cut off! and that word, 2 Thess. ii. 12. 'That they might be

damned who believe not, but took pleasure in unrighteousness.' O but the wrath of a dying Christ, and of a crucified Saviour, is dreadful; it is more sad and terrible than the wrath of God should have been if Christ had not died. I will tell you (O hypocrites in Zion) the worst news that ever was published in your ears, and it is this, Christ died and rose again, and to those that are begotten to a lively hope, they are glad tidings of great joy (and therein they may comfort themselves), but ye may wear a rough garment to deceive, and go to heaven in your own apprehension: but, O! the said disappointment that is waiting on many such. And to close with this, we would obtest you, as ye would answer to your terrible and dreadful Judge, that shall stand one day upon his throne, which he shall fix in the clouds, we obtest you, by all the joys of heaven, and we obtest you by all the everlasting pains of hell, and we obtest you by all the curses that are written within the volume of this book, and by all the sweet and comfortable promises that are in this everlasting gospel, and by the love that you owe to your immortal souls, and as ye would not crucify Christ afresh, believe, and embrace the offers that are presented now unto you. Know ye whether or not this shall be the last summons that ye shall get to believe? That so, if ye do reject it, Christ shall come from heaven and pronounce that sad and lamentable sentence unto you, 'Depart from me ye cursed, I know you not' Now to him that can bless these things to you, we desire to give praise.

SERMON III.

1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son, JESUS CHRIST, &c.*

IT was a command that Solomon gave unto his son, Prov. xxii. 26. 'That he should not be surety for debt, nor should be one of those that striketh hands;' but, O! what spotless branches of that command hath our blessed Lord Jesus committed, when he did condescend to be surety for our debt, and to pay what was impossible for us to satisfy? Hath not Christ made a precious exchange with sinners? He wreathed about his own precious neck that bond and yoke of our iniquities, and hath given to us that unweariable ease, and portable yoke of his commandments; among which this is one, That we should believe on him. Spotless Christ was made sin for us, that sinful we might be made the righteousness of God in him: and is not this the

condemnation of the world, that will not believe in him, that we will not delight ourselves in loving of him? And I would say this to you, that though you would weep one half of your days, and pray the other half; yet, if ye want this noble grace of faith, 'Your righteousness shall be but like a menstruous cloth and filthy rags before him;' for what is praying without believing, but a taking of his blessed name in vain? What is confering upon the most divine and precious truths of God, without believing? Is it not a lying to the Holy Ghost, and a flattering of God with our mouth? And we would have you knowing this, that there is a sweet harmony that is now made up betwixt Moses and Christ, betwixt the law and the gospel. The law bringeth us to Christ as a Saviour, and Christ bringeth us back again to the law to be a rule of our walk, to which we must subject ourselves. So then, would you know the compend of a Christian's walk? It is a sweet travelling between mount Sinai and mount Sion, betwixt Moses and Christ, betwixt the law and the gospel. And we conceive, that the more deep that the exercise of the law be in a Christian's conscience before his closing with Christ, there is so much the more precious and excellent advantages waiting for him.

I. There is this advantage that waiteth on the deep exercise of the law, that it is the way to win to much establishment in the faith when once we begin to close with Christ. O Christians, would ye know that which maketh the superstructure and building of grace to be within you, as a bowing wall, and as a tottering fence, so that oftentimes ye are in hazard to raze the foundation? it is this, ye were not under the exercise of the law before your believing in Jesus Christ. There are some who do not abide three days at mount Sinai, and these shall not dwell many days at mount Sion.

II. There is this advantage that waiteth on the deep exercise of the law, it maketh Christ precious to a man's soul. What is that which filleth the soul of a Christian with many high and excellent thoughts of Christ? Is it not this, to have the law registrating our bond, and putting us (as we use to speak) to the horn, that is, to have the law cursing us, and using the sentence of condemnation against us? That which maketh us to have such low and undervaluing thoughts of precious Christ, is, because the most part of us are not acquainted with the deep and serious exercise of the law; that is a mystery to the most part of Christians' practice. Ye know that there were four streams which went out from the paradise of God, into which man was first placed; and so we may say, that there are four golden streams, by which lost and destroyed men are brought back again to this

Eden and Paradise of everlasting delight. *Firstly*, There is the precious stream of Christ's righteousness, by which we must be justified. And, *Secondly*, there is the stream of his sanctification, by which we must be purified. *Thirdly*, There is the stream of the wisdom of Christ, by which we must be conducted through this wilderness wherein we have lost our way. And, *Fourthly*, There is the stream of Christ's redemption, by which we must be delivered from the power of our enemies, and must turn the battle in the gate. It is by the redemption of Christ that we shall once sing that triumphant song, 'O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?' O! but all these streams will be sweet and refreshing to a soul that is hotly pursued by the law, so long as we see not the ugliness of our leprosy in the glass of the law, we have our own Abana and Pharpar, that we think may do our turn; but when once our case is truly laid open to us, then we will be content to wash ourselves in Jordan seven times.

III. There is this advantage that waiteth on the deep exercise of the law, that it maketh a Christian live constantly under the impression of the sinfulness of sin. What is it that maketh sin exceeding sinful to a Christian? Is it not this, he hath been forty days in Moses' school? And we conceive that the ground why such fools as we make a mock at sin, is because we know not what it is to be under the power of his wrath, and the apprehensions of the indignation of God.

But now to come to that which we intend to speak of: we told you, that the first occasion that we spake upon these words, that there were many excellent things concerning the grace of faith holden forth in them. The first thing, which was holden forth concerning this radical grace of faith, was the infinite advantage that redounded to a Christian through the exercise of faith, and giving obedience to this command, which we cleared to be holden forth, not only from the scope, but also from the nature of this command. And now to speak a little to the point, we shall propose these considerations, that may abundantly shew how advantageous a thing this excellence of faith is.

I. The first consideration that speaketh it, is this, That faith maketh Christ precious to a soul, according to that word, 1 Pet. iii. 7. 'To you that believe, Christ is precious.' And we would have you knowing this, that faith maketh Christ more precious to a soul, than sense or any other thing can make him. And, *First*, Faith maketh Christ more precious than sense, because the estimation which the grace of faith hath of Christ, is builded upon the excellency of his person; but the estimation of sense is builded upon the excellency of his actings: so that because he is such to them, therefore they love and esteem him. But

that heroic grace of faith taketh up the excellency of Christ's person, and that maketh him precious to them. *Secondly*, Faith maketh Christ more precious than sense, because sense looketh to that love which Christ manifesteth in his face, and in his hands, and in his feet; but faith looketh to that love which is in his heart. Sense will cry forth, 'Who is like to thee? whose countenance is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars, whose hand are as gold rings set with beryl, and whose legs are like pillars of marble set in sockets of gold.' Sense will look to the smilings of Christ, and will wonder: it will look to his dispensations and actings, and will be constrained to cry out, 'Who is like unto thee?' But the grace of faith solaceth itself in the fountain from whence all these springs and sweet inundations of love do flow. *Thirdly*, Faith maketh Christ more precious than sense; because faith looketh not only to what Christ is presently, but unto what Christ is from eternity before time, and what Christ shall be unto eternity after time; but sense only doth look to what Christ is presently. And ye must conceive, that the sweet travellings of faith betwixt infinite love from eternity before, and infinite love unto eternity after, must make faith to fall in a sea of wondering, and raiseth the thoughts to the highest pitch of desire and estimation. *Fourthly*, We may likewise add, that the impression of the preciousness of Christ, which sense maketh upon the soul, is not so constant, nor so single, as that which faith doth make. O but the grace of faith giveth the Christian a broad look of Christ, and letteth him see Christ clothed with ornaments of glory and divine majesty. Sense followeth Christ rather that it may see his miracles and love, and that it may be fed with loaves; but faith follows Christ for himself above all.

II. The second consideration, to speak the advantage of it, is, that the grace of faith hath as it were an arbitrary power with God: so that whatsoever a Christian shall seek in faith, he shall receive it. It is the noble gift that was once given to faith, that it should never seek any thing and be denied, according to that word in Matth xxi. 22. 'And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive it.' And that word in John xv. 7. 'Abide in me,' that is, believe; and the promise is annexed to this, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask, ye shall receive.' And it is clear likewise from the preceding verse of our text, that if we obey this commandment of faith, 'Whatsoever we shall ask of God, we shall receive it. And I would speak these two things to you from this, *First*, That sometimes Christ putteth a blank in a Christian's hand, who is much in the exercise of faith, according to that in Matth. xx. 32. Is there not an ample blank put into that man's hand? 'What wilt thou that I should do un-

to thee?' Christ desireth him to fill up that blank with what he would. And. *Secondly*, There is this, which is one of the greatest steps of Christ's matchless condescendency, that oftentimes, when his own have sought in their presumption a blank to be put in their hand, Christ condescendeth to give it, according to that strange passage in Mark. x 35, 36. The two disciples who presented this desire to Christ, we desire, say they, 'That whatsoever we ask thou shouldst give it unto us.' And presently that is answered, 'What will ye that I should do for you? Christ hath an infinite good-will to satisfy the desires of his own: and that which yet more speaketh out Christ's boundless good-will to satisfy the desires of all who belong to him, may be cleared in that word, John xvi 24 where he chargeth his disciples with this, 'Hitherto,' saith he, 'have ye asked me nothing,' ye must not suppose that Peter James, and John, never sought a suit of Christ; but the meaning of that expression is this, ye sought nothing in comparison of that which I was willing to give, and which your necessity did call for at my hands, which ye should have sought.

III. There is this third consideration, to point out that advantage of faith; it is that grace that keepeth all the graces of the Spirit in life and exercise. Faith is that high wheel, at the motion of which all the lower wheels do move: if so we may speak, faith is that *primum mobile*, that first moves and turns about all the lower graces of the Spirit, accordnig to that, 2. Pet. i. 5. 'Add to your faith, virtue, and to your virtue, patience, and to your patience, brotherly kindness. *First*, The grace of faith keepeth in exercise the grace of love, as is clear, Eph. iii. 17, where these two graces are subjoined; as likewise from Rom. v. 1. compared with verse 5 'Being justified by faith.' Then this effect followeth upon it, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our own hearts.' And so it is certain, that faith keepeth love in life, faith being the spy of the soul, and that intelligencer and precious messenger, it goeth out and bringeth in objects unto love. Faith draweth aside the vail, and love sitteth down and solaceth itself in the discoveries of faith. *Secondly*, The grace of faith likewise keepeth the grace of mortification in exercise, as is clear not only from Eph vi. 6 but from 1 John v 4. 'This is our victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith. And it is certain that faith keepeth mortification in exercise, and advanceth holiness, not only because of this that faith is that grace that presenteth to a Christian the absolute purity and spotless holiness of Jesus Christ; but also because it maketh them esteem their idols tasteless, as the white of an egg, and they become unto them as their sorrowful meat. The best principle of

mortification is this, the discoveries of the invisible virtues of Jesus Christ: that mortification, which arises from the lovely discoveries of the excellencies of Jesus Christ, is most real and abiding; as those waters which arise from the highest springs, are not only constant, but likewise most deep and excellent. *Thirdly*, Faith likewise hath influence upon mortification, as it doth take hold of the infinite strength that is in Christ, by which a Christian is enabled to mortify his corruptions. *Fourthly*, Faith likewise maketh application 'of the blood of sprinkling, by which we are purified from dead works.' *Fifthly*, Likewise the grace of faith keepeth in exercise the grace of humility; as is clear, Rom. viii. 27. By what law, saith he, is boasting excluded? It is not by the law of works, but by the law of faith. *Sixthly*, Faith keepeth in exercise the grace of joy; as is clear, Rom. xv. 13. 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.' So that ye see the proper fruit of faith, 'is joy in the Holy Ghost.' And certainly, did we believe more, we should rejoice more. *Seventhly*, and *lastly*, Faith keepeth in exercise the grace of hope; for it is impossible for hope to be in lively exercise, except faith once be exercised, which may be a shame unto you, for how can we hope to attain the thing that is promised, except our faith first close with the promise? So there is this difference betwixt the grace of faith and the grace of hope; the grace of faith closeth with the promises; but the grace of hope closeth with the thing that is promised.

IV. There is this fourth consideration, that may speak out the excellency of the grace of faith, it is that grace by which a Christian doth attain to most divine fellowship and constant correspondence with heaven. Would ye have that question resolved and determined, what is the best way, 'Not to stir up our beloved, or awake him till he please?' It is this, be much in the grace of faith: this is clear from Eph. iii. 17. 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith: by the exercise of all other graces Christ is but a sojourner, 'that turneth aside to tarry but for a night;' but by the exercise of this grace he cometh to take up house with us. I will tell you what faith is, it is a ladder that reacheth between heaven and earth; by the steps of which a Christian doth daily go up to heaven, and converse with the higher house; faith is that grace (as the apostle speaketh) 'by which we have access to the throne of his grace.' Faith ushers in the believer to the throne: and without it he cannot have access there, nor joy when he is there.

V. Here is this advantage that attendeth the exercise of faith, a believing Christian is a praying Christian: according to that word in Mark ix. 24. where these two are conjoined together,

Lord, I believe:' and then he falleth to his prayer presently after that confession, 'Help thou myunbelief.' And it is clear from Psalm lxiii. 1. 'O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee, my soul thirsteth for thee?' And sometimes faith is a most impatient grace; but we may always say of it, that it is a most diligent grace. O! is it not the neglect of this precious exercise of faith, and of the duty of secret prayer, that makes our leanness testify to our face, and maketh our souls a barren wilderness? I am persuaded of this, that since Christ had any followers, and since ever this everlasting gospel was preached in paradise: the exercise of secret prayer was never so much neglected. We have turned over all our prayers into compliments with God. We know not what it is 'to rise at midnight and call upon God, and to inquire after our Maker under the silent watches of the night.' O! but it is a sweet diversion from sleep, to retire ourselves, in the silent seasons of the night, from all thoughts about worldly matters, and to converse with that invisible Majesty.

VI. There is this sixth consideration to point out the advantage of faith: that faith is that grace that doth facilitate a Christian's obedience, and maketh it most pleasant and easy; this is clear from Heb. xi. 8. 'By faith Abraham, when commanded to go to a strange land, obeyed and went out, not knowing whether he went.' The word may berendered, He did cheerfully obey. And verse 17. 'By faith he offered up his only son.' Would ye know the reason why his commands are your burden, and why his precepts are your crosses? It is because of this, ye do not believe. And so it is most certain, that it is impossible for a Christian to attain to a pleasant way of obedience, without the exercise of faith. Faith holdeth up the crown to a Christian, and his crown maketh him to obey. Faith gathereth strength from Christ, and that strength maketh obedience very easy. Faith taketh up the excellency of Christ, and this maketh a Christian to look upon his duty, more as his dignity than his duty. And we are persuaded of this, that our chariot-wheel should move more swiftly '(like the chariots of Abinadab),' if we were more in the exercise of the grace of faith. Would ye know an answer to that question, what is first more requisite for a Christian while here below? Faith. And what is secondly most requisite? Faith. And what, thirdly, is first most requisite for a Christian? Even faith above all things, and above all things, faith.

VII. There is another advantage of it, that by faith our service and prayers are accepted of God. Would ye know what is the prayer of a Christian that is not in faith? 'It is a smoke in his nostrils, and a fire that burneth all the day. The unbeliever's sacrifice is an abomination to the Lord.' This is clear from Heb.

xi. 4. 'By faith Abel offered up unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain;' and we conceive that there are many unanswerable prayers which we do put up, because we want that noble exercise of faith.

VIII. And lastly, we shall likewise add this, that faith is that grace by which a Christian hath that perfect and immediate sight (as it were) of great things that are promised to him; faith bringeth a Christian within sight of heaven, and faith bringeth a Christian within sight of God, according to that word, Heb xi. 1 'Faith is the evidence of things not seen,' and that noble paradox that is said of faith, Heb. xi. 27. 'By faith Moses saw him that is invisible.' Is it not an impossible thing to see that which cannot be seen? But the meaning of it is this, that faith's discoveries of God, are as certain and sure as the discoveries of our bodily eyes are: faith is an intelligent grace; yea, it is a most sure and infallible grace: what will faith not do? And what can we do who want faith?

Now to enforce the advantages and excellencies of faith a little more, we shall propose to you the disadvantages of that woeful sin of unbelief.

I There is this disadvantage of the sin of unbelief; that all the actions, that proceed from an unbeliever, are impure and defiled, according to that in Titus i. 15. 'But unto them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled.' Their prayer is unclean: yea (as Solomon speaketh) 'their plowing is sin: yea, their going about the most excellent duties (for matter) is an abomination to God; according to that word, Rom. xiv. 23. 'Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.' So the want of faith is the great polluter of all our actions, and of all our performances.

II. There is this second disadvantage of misbelief, that it is impossible for one, in the exercise of unbelief, to mortify a lust or idol, and we may allude unto these words in Matth. xvii. 20. when his disciples came to him, and asked this question, 'Why could we not cast out this devil?' that was given a an answer, 'Because of your unbelief:' unbelief is that which taketh up arms for our idols, and doth most strongly defend them, for there is nothing that will kill corruption so much, as the exercise of faith: and when all this is laid aside, we have laid by our weapons, and have in a manner concluded a treaty of peace with our idols, that we shall not offend them, if they offend not us.

III. There is this disadvantage, that waiteth upon the sin of unbelief, that such an one cannot win nor attain to the grace of establishment, 'But is always as the waves of the sea, tossed

to and fro, until once he win to the exercise of faith; as is clear from Isa. vii. 2. Except ye believe ye shall not be established.

IV. There is this disadvantage that waiteth on it, it is the mother of hardness and stupidity of heart, according to that word in Mark xvi. 14. where he upbraideth them because of their unbelief: and then what danger followeth? to wit, 'hardness of heart:' this is clear also from Acts xix 9. where these two sister devils are conjoined and locked together, 'unbelief and hardness of heart, because it is unbelief indeed that hindereth all the graces by which the grace of tenderness must be maintained.

V. There is this disadvantage in the sin of unbelief, that it is big with child of apostacy from God, and of defection from him, according to that word, Heb. iii. 12. 'Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief (and the fruit of it) 'to depart from the living God.' And certainly it is no wonder that unbelief travail in birth till that cursed child of apostacy be brought forth; not only because of this, that an unbeliever loseth the thoughts of the excellency of Christ, but also because he increaseth in his thoughts of love towards his idols, for Christ doth decrease in those who misbelieve, and their idols do increase in their love, and in their desires, and in their estimation.

VI. There is this sixth disadvantage in the sin of unbelief. it hindereth the communication of many signal workings and tokens of the love and favour of the Most High, according to that sad word that is in Matth. xiii. 58. at the close, 'He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.' Unbelief, as it were, laid a restraint upon Christ, that he could not effectuate those things which he was willing to perform: and (to shut up our discourse at this time) I would only add these two aggravations, which may somewhat enforce what we have spoken; (I say) there are these two aggravations in the sin of unbelief, even in his own who have a right (and also his call) to believe.

1. That after Christ hath given most sensible discoveries of himself, Wherein ye have seen him, as it were face to face, yet ye will not believe; this is clear from John vi. 36. 'Though ye have seen me,' saith Christ, 'yet ye do not believe in me.' There is not a manifestion of Christ's presence, but it is a witness against you, because of your unbelief. Would you hear the voice of sense that is rectified? It is this, 'believe on the Son of God.'

2. That notwithstanding of the signal demonstrations of the power of Christ, yet though it were the mortifying of some lust and idol within them, yet they will not believe, but upon new temptations will doubt of his love to them. Christ preacheth faith by his word, he preacheth faith by his sufferings, he preach-

eth faith by his dispensations, he preacheth faith by his promises, he preacheth faith by his rods; and if these five instruments will not engage your hearts to believe, what can move them? Do not his two wounds in his precious hands, preach out this point of faith, 'Believe him?' Doth not that hole opened in his side preach this doctrine, 'that we should believe in him?' And those two wounds that he received in his precious feet, do they not preach this, 'that we should believe in a crucified Saviour?' And we would only say this, that sometimes it is the case of his own, that after the convictions of this, that it is their duty to believe, and also after some desire to close with Christ, yet they find inability to close with him. Is it not certain, that to will (to believe) is sometimes present with you, but how to perform ye know not? And I would have a Christian making this fourfold use of such a dispensation as that, (which is most ordinary) when convictions of our duty to believe, and some desires to close with Christ, is not followed with actual performances.

1. To study to have your convictions more deeply rooted within you; for it doth sometimes follow, that resolutions and mints to believe, are not blest with actual believing; because the conviction of our duty to believe is not deeply imprinted upon our conscience.

2. Be convinced of that desperate enmity (and that mystery of iniquity) that is within you, that you can have some will to do, without ability to perform, we confess it is not an ordinary disease in these days, to have such a contrariety betwixt a Christian's will and his practice, our will for the most part being no better than our practice; but sometimes it is, which may make you cry forth, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?'

3. That ye would be much in the employing of Christ, that as he hath given you to will, so also he might make you to do. Christ is about to convince his own in such a dispensation as that, 'That faith is the gift of God.' Faith is so noble a grace, that it cannot be spinned out from our resolutions, nor from our endeavours; faith is such a divine principle as the Father's right-hand must plant in our souls.

4. Let it convince you of the excellency of the grace of faith, (for the difficulty of attaining to any thing may speak out the excellency of that thing) there is no sin but it may be easily win at; there is an easiness and facility to overtake the paths of our idols; but the graces of the Spirit are so excellent things, that we must fight before we attain them; and you who are strangers to Christ Jesus (and have never known what it is to close with him) we would request you, in Christ's name, to be reconciled

to him. What know ye, O men (or rather atheists), but this shall be the last summons that ye shall get to believe? And because ye disobey this precious summons, there shall be one presented to you that ye cannot sit. I remember of one man, who looked upon many thousands that were under his command, weeping over them, when he considered how that within a few years all these should be laid in their graves, and should be in eternity. O! but it were much of our concernment, to be trying ourselves how it is with us. We are not afraid that it is a breach of charity, to wish that but one of each ten that are within these doors, were heirs of the grace of life, and had the solid and spiritual expectation of heaven. I think, if Christ were to come presently to speak to us, he might not only say to each twelve that are here, "One of you shall betray me:" but we are afraid that he would say to each twelve that are here, "Eleven "of you shall betray me, and but one only shall pass free." O! doth it not concern you, to inquire where you shall rest at night, when the long shadow of the everlasting evenings shall be stretched out upon you? I think there are some that are so settled upon their lees, that if they were one day in hell, and saw all the torments that are there, and were brought from it the next day to live on earth, they would not repent. And more, there are some, that take them up one day to see the joys of heaven, and bring them back again, they would not pursue after these blessed and everlasting enjoyments. O! is not Christ much undervalued by us? But I must tell you this, "One woe is past, but behold "another woe is fast coming." O! the shrieking of these spirits that are entered into their everlasting prison-house, out of which there is no redemption. What shall be your choice, when Christ shall come in the clouds? I am persuaded, there are many to whom, at that day, this doctrine would be ravishing, viz "That 'there were not a death, that there were not a God, and that there 'were not an eternity.' O! will ye believe 'that the sword of the 'justice of God is sheathed in heaven, and shall come down to 'make a sacrifice, not in the land of Idumea, nor in the land of 'Bozra, but he is to make a sacrifice among the people who seem'ed to make a covenant with him by sacrifice.' Ah, ah, shall we say that? If that argument were used to many, that within forty days they should be at their long and everlasting home, they would yet spend thirty-nine of these days in taking pleasure upon their lusts. I am persuaded of this, that there are many, who think that the way betwixt heaven and earth is but one day's journey; they think they can believe in one day, and triumph at night: but O! it shall be a short triumph that such believers as these shall have. Therefore, O study to close with

a crucified Saviour, rest on him by faith, delight yourselves in him with love, and let your souls be longing for the day when that voice shall be heard in heaven (and O how sweetly shall it be sung?) 'Arise, arise, arise, my love, my dove, my fair one, 'and come away; for behold your winter is past, your everlast-'ing summer is come, and the time of the singing of birds is 'near:' when Christ shall come over 'these mountains of Bether,' he shall cry, 'Behold I come:' and the soul shall sweetly answer, 'Come, blessed Lord Jesus, Come.' O what a life shall it be: that with these two arms ye shall eternally encircle Christ, and hold him in your arms, or rather be encircled by him? 'Wait 'for him, for he shall come, and his reward is with him', and he shall once take home the wearied travellers of hope.

SERMON IV.

1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son, JESUS CHRIST*, &c.

THERE are two great and excellent gifts, which God, in the depth of his boundless love, hath bestowed on his own. *First*, There is that infinite gift, and royal donation, his own beloved Son, Jesus Christ, which is called, 'The gift of God,' John iv. 10. And, *Secondly*, There is that excellent gift of the grace of faith, which God hath bestowed upon his own, which is also called 'The gift of God,' Eph. ii. 8. 'Faith is the gift of God'. And is it not certain, that these two gracious gifts ought to engage our souls and hearts much unto him? Infinite Majesty could give no gift greater than his Son, and infinite poverty could receive no other gift so suitable as Christ: it was the most noble gift that heaven could give, and it is the greatest advantage for earth to receive it. And we could wish that the most part of the study and practice of men (that is spent in pursuit of these low and transient vanities) might be once taken up in that precious pursuit after Christ: we could wish that all the questions and debates of the time were turned over into that soul concerning question, 'What shall we do to be saved?' And that all the questions, controversies, and contentions of the time were turned over into that divine contention and heavenly debate, 'Who should be most for Christ, who should be most for exalting 'of the noble and excellent plant of renown,' and that all your judging and searchings of other men's practices and estates might be turned over into that useful search, 'To prove and examine our-

'selves whether we be in the faith or not.' And I would ask you this question, what are your thoughts concerning precious Christ, seeing he is that noble object of faith? We would only have you taking along these things, by which Christ may be much commended to your hearts: *First*, There was never any, that with the eyes of faith did behold the matchless beauty and transcendent worth of that crucified Saviour, that returned his enemy. There is soul-conquering virtue in the face of Christ, and there is a heart captivating, and overcoming power in the beauty of Jesus Christ. The first sight that ever persecuting Saul got of Christ, brought him to an endless captivity of love. *Secondly*, There is this that we would say of precious Christ, which may engage our souls unto him, that for all the wrongs believers do to Christ, yet hath he never an evil word of them to his Father, but commends them: which is clear from that of John xvii. 6. where Christ doth commend the disciples to the Father for the grace of obedience, 'They have kept thy word;' and for the grace of faith, verse 8. 'They have believed that thou didst 'send me.' And yet were not the disciples most defective in obedience both in this, that they did not take up their cross and follow Christ? And also in that, they did not adhere to him in the day that he was brought to Caiaphas' hall? And were they not most defective in the grace of faith? As is clear from Matth. xvii. 17. and likewise from John xiv. 1. He is pressing them to believe in him, and yet he doth commend them to the Father, as most perfect in these things. *Thirdly*, There is this that we would lastly say of him, who is that noble object of faith, look to the eminent depths of Christ's condescendency, and then ye will be provoked to love him. Was it not infinite love that made Christ to lie three days in the grave, that we might be through all the ages of eternity with him? Was it not infinite condescendency that made his precious head wear a crown of thorns, that we might eternally wear a crown of glory? Was it not infinite condescendency that made Christ wear a purple robe, that so we might wear that precious robe of the righteousness of the saints? And was it not matchless condescendency, that Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, and like unto us, that so we might become like unto him, and be made the righteousness of God in him?

But to come to that which we intend mainly to speak unto at this time, which is that second thing we proposed to speak of from these words; and that is, concerning the excellency of this grace of faith, which we cleared, was holden out in that, that faith was called his commandment, which is so called by way of eminency and excellency. There are many things in scripture

which may sweetly point out the precious excellency of this grace of faith, and we shall only speak to these things.

I. The *First* thing that speaketh out the excellency of faith, is this, it exerciseth itself upon a most noble object, to wit, Jesus Christ; faith and love being the two arms of the immortal soul, by which we do embrace a crucified Saviour, which is so often pointed at in scripture: and we shall point at these three principal acts of faith, which it exerciseth on Jesus Christ as the object of it.

1. The *First* is, To make up an union betwixt Christ and the believer (faith being indeed an uniting grace, and that which knitteth the members to the head); and to make this more fully appear, we would point out a little what sweet harmony and correspondency there is betwixt these two sister-graces, to wit, faith and love. Faith is that nail which fasteneth the soul to Christ, and love is that grace that driveth the nail to the head; faith at first taketh up a tender grip of Christ, and then love cometh in and maketh the soul take a more sure grip of him.

2. *Secondly*, Ye may see that harmony in this; faith is that grace which taketh hold, as it were, of the garments of Christ, and of his word; but love (that ambitious grace) taketh hold of the heart of Christ, and, as it were, his heart doth melt in the hand of love. *Thirdly*, It may be seen in this, faith is that grace which draweth the first draught of the likeness and image of Christ upon a soul, but that accomplishing grace of love doth complete these first draughts, and these imperfect lineaments of Christ's image, which were first drawn on the soul. *Fourthly*, By faith and love the heart of Christ and of the believer are so united, that they are no more two, but one spirit.

2. There is this second act that faith exerciseth on Christ, and it is in discovering the matchless excellencies, and the transcendent properties of Jesus Christ. O what large and precious commentaries doth faith make upon Christ? It is indeed that faithful spy, which doth always bring up a good report of him. Hence it is, that faith is called 'understanding', Col. ii. 2. because it is that grace which revealeth much of the precious truth of that noble object.

3. And there is this third noble act of faith exercising itself upon Christ, viz. It maketh Christ precious to the soul, according to that word, 1 Pet. ii. 17. 'Unto you that believe, he is precious.' And if there were no other thing to speak forth its worth but that, it is more than sufficient: for no doubt this is the exercise of the higher-house, to be dwelling on the contemplation of Christ's beauty, and to have their souls transported with love toward him, and with joy in him. Reason and amazement are sel-

dom companions, but here they do sweetly join together; 'First, A Christian loveth Christ because of Christ's actings; and then he loveth all these actings, because they come from Christ.

II. Now, *Secondly*, This pointeth out the precious excellency of the grace of faith, it is that grace which is most mysterious and sublime in its actings, it hath a more divine and sublime way of acting than any other grace; hence it is called, 'The mystery of faith' which speaketh this, that the actings of faith are mysteries to the most part of the world; and I shall only point at these things which may speak out the mysterious actings of the grace of faith.

1. Faith can believe, and fix itself upon a word of promise, although sense, reason, and probability seem to contradict the accomplishment of that promise; faith walketh not by the low dictates of sense and reason, but by a higher rule, to wit, 'The sure word of prophecy:' which is clear from Rom. iv. 19. where Abraham believed the promise, notwithstanding that sense and reason seemed to contradict it: 'He considered not the deadness of his own body, neither the barrenness of Sarah's womb, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God:' as is clear from Hebrews xi. 29, 30. where faith believed their 'passing through the red sea, as through dry ground,' which was most contrary to sense and reason: Faith believed the 'falling down of the walls of Jericho, by the blowing of horns.' Which things are most impossible for sense and reason; for sense will oftentimes cry out, 'All men are liars;' and reason will say, 'How can such a thing be?' And yet that heroic grace of faith crieth out, 'Hath he spoken it? He will also do it. Hath he said it? Then it shall come to pass.'

2. Faith can believe a word of promise, notwithstanding that the dispensations of God seem to contradict it; as was clear in Job, who professed, 'He would trust in God, though he should kill him.' And no doubt but this was the practice of believing Jacob, he trusted that promise should be accomplished, 'That the elder should serve the younger,' though all the dispensations of God (which he did meet with) seemed to say, that the promise should not be accomplished.

3. Faith can believe a word of promise, even when the commands of God seem to contradict the accomplishment of that promise: this is clear in that singular instance of Abraham's faith, that notwithstanding he was commanded to kill his promised seed (upon whom did depend the accomplishment of the promises), yet he believed that the promises should be performed. And though there were indeed extraordinary and strange trials of his faith, as he had natural affections to wrestle with, yet over the belly of all these, believing Abraham giveth faith to the promise, and bringeth his son Isaac to the altar (though he did receive him back again); this is clear from Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19.

4. Faith can exercise itself upon the promise, notwithstanding that challenges and convictions of unworthiness and guilt do wait on the Christian: that is clear, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. 'That altho' his house was not so with God as did become,' yet he believed the promise; as likewise is clear from Psalm lxv. 3. 'Iniquities do prevail against me,' and yet that doth not interrupt his faith, 'As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.' And certainly, it was a noble and precious act of faith to believe, notwithstanding of un-answerable challenges of guilt; the best way both to crucify our idols, and to answer these challenges, is believing, and hoping against hope; and closing with Christ; this is more clear from Isa. lxiv. 6, 7. compared with verse 8. where, after strange challenges, the prophet hath a strange word, 'But now, O Lord, thou art a Father.' There is an emphasis in the word *now* for all this, yet 'thou art *now* our Father.'

5. And, *Lastly*, This pointeth out the mysterious acting of the grace of faith, that it exerciseth itself upon an invisible object, even upon Christ not yet seen, according to that word, 1 Pet. v. 8. 'Whom having not seen, yet ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing,' &c. I pose the greater part of you who are here, whether or not those be two of the greatest paradoxes and mysteries unto you? For is not this a mystery, to love him whom ye never saw? 'Whom having not seen, yet ye love: To love an absent and unseen Christ, is a mystery to the most part of the world: and is not this a mystery, to believe on him whom we never saw? 'In whom, though ye see him not, yet believing.' And I shall add this, that faith can hold fast its interest with God, notwithstanding the most precious Christian should call us hypocrites, and not acknowledge us; this is clear in the practice of Job; and most clear from that word, Isa. lxiii. 16. 'Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not.'

III. *Thirdly*, This pointeth out the excellency of the grace of faith, that faith (when it is in exercise) is that grace by which a Christian doth attain unto most sensible enjoyments. There is a great question, that is much debated among Christians, what is the way to win this happy length, to be always under the sweet and refreshing influence of heaven, and to have this dew always coming down upon our branches? I can give no answer to it but this, be much in the exercise of faith; this is clear upon that notion and name out upon faith, Isa. xlv. 22. It is called 'a look to Christ,' which is a most sensible act. If ye would know a description of faith, it is this, the divine contemplation of the immortal soul, upon that divine, excellent, and precious object, Jesus Christ. For God never made faith a liar, and there-

fore its eye is never off him that is the noble object of faith, Jesus Christ manifested in the gospel; as is clear, Eph. i. 13. 'After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of pro-'mise', which preacheth out the excellent enjoyments these had after their closing with Christ, 'who is invisible.' Our faith is called a seeing, which speaketh out this, that faith's sight of God is as certain as if we did behold him with our eyes; as is clear, Heb. xi. 27. 'Moses saw him by faith who is invisible.' And we conceive, that the ground which maketh the most part of us have such complaints, 'How long wilt thou forget us, for ever?' it is this, the want of the spiritual exercise of faith; and are there not some here that may cry out, 'It is more than thirty days 'since I did behold the king?' Yea, there are some who may go a greater length, and cry out, 'I have lived these two years at Je-'rusalem, and yet I have not seen the king's face?' Yea, there are some here whose complaint may go a little higher, and cry forth, 'these three years and six months it hath not rained on me,' but the clouds have been restrained and bound up, and the heavens have become brass. And would ye know the rise of these complaints, it is this, Ye are not much in the spiritual exercise of faith. And to you I would only say these two words, *First*, It is easier to persuade a reprobate that he is defective in the fear of God, and in his love to God, than to persuade some such that they are wanting to God in their faith; for they hold fast that piece of desperate iniquity till they die. *Secondly*, We would say to those of you who have the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and have tasted of the sweetness of Christ, some of you will be less convinced, for the neglect of the duty of faith, than for the neglect of the duty of prayer, or of the duty of keeping the sabbath-day. But I am persuaded of this, that if the noble worth of that transcendent object were known, we would have a holy impatience until once we did believe.

IV. *Fourthly*, this pointeth out the excellency of the grace of faith, it is that grace by which a Christian is advanced to the highest and most inconceivable pitch of dignity, and that is, to be the child of the living God: as is clear, John i. 12. 'To as 'many as received (or believed in him) he gave power, or prero-'gative to become the sons of God.' And certainly that noble prerogative of adoption is much undervalued by many: and I will tell you two grounds whereon the most part of men undervalue the excellent gift of adoption: *First*, They do not take up the infinite highness of God, and what a one he is, otherwise they would cry out with David, 'seemeth it a small thing in your eyes 'to be a son to the King of kings?' *Secondly*, We do not take up nor understand these matchless privileges which are given

to them who are once in this estate. I am persuaded, if this were believed, that 'he who is a servant, doth not abide in the house for ever,' (though he that is a son doth) it would stir us up to more divine zeal in our pursuit after faith.

V. *Fifthly*, This likewise pointeth out this excellency of the grace of faith, it is that grace by which all other actions are pleasant to God, and are taken off our hand; as is clear, Heb xi. 4. 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice 'than Cain,' which must be understood even of all other duties. And that word, verse 6. 'Without faith it is impossible to please 'God' speaketh this also, That by faith we do exceedingly please him. And this is a most sad and lamentable reproof unto many who are here, that their actions do not please God, because they are not in faith. Would you know a description of your prayers? (ye who are hypocrites and destitute of the knowledge of God) it is this, you prayers are the breach of the third command, 'In 'taking the name of the Lord in vain, for which he will not hold 'you guiltless.' And would ye know what is your hearing of sermons? 'It is an abomination to the Lord,' according to that word in Titus i. 15. 'To the unbelieving and impure nothing is clean.' And as Solomon doth speak, 'The plowing of the wicked, is sin:' so that all your actions that you go about are but an offence to the majesty of the Lord.

Now we would speak to these two things before we proceed to the evidences of faith, to wit, *First*, That there is a difference betwixt the direct act of faith, and the reflecting act of faith. For there may be a direct act of faith in a Christian, when he is not persuaded that he doth believe; but the reflecting acts of faith are these that a Christian hath, when he is persuaded in his conscience that he doth believe. And we would, *Secondly*, say, that there are many that go down to their grave under that soul-destroying delusion, that they are in the faith, and yet never did know what faith is. I am persuaded, that there are many, whom all the preachings in the world did never persuade that they did never believe, their faith being born with them, and it will die with them, without any fruit. But faith being such an excellent grace, and so advantageous (whereof we have spoken a few things) we shall speak a little further of it 1. In pointing out some evidences, by which a Christian may know whether or not he be indeed in the faith. 2. I shall give you some helps whereby faith may be kept in exercise.

I. Now there is this first evidence of faith, that a Christian who doth believe, accounteth absence and a want of fellowship with Christ and communion with him, one of the greatest and most lamentable crosses that ever he had; as is clear, Psalm xiii.

3. 'Lighten mine eyes,' said David, that is, 'Let me behold and be satisfied with thy face;' and the motive that he backeth it with is this, 'Lest I sleep the sleep of death.' David thought himself a dead man if Christ did withdraw his presence from him. Also it is clear, Cant. iii. 1 (compared with the following verses) where absence from Christ, and want of communion with him, was the greatest cross that the spouse had; and it is clear from John xx. 11, 12 13 where Mary had a holy design of all things in respect and comparison of Christ. But I will tell you what a hypocrite doth most lament, and that is the want of reputation among the saints; that is the great god and idol among hypocrites, and that which (when not enjoined) hypocrites and atheists lament most, the world, and the lusts of their eyes; when they want these, then they cry out, 'they have taken away my gods, and what have I more?' They think heaven can never make up the loss of earth. And certainly, if many of us would examine ourselves by this, we would find ourselves most defective. I would pose all you who are here, who have taken on a name to be followers of Christ, whether or not ye have been content to walk thirty days in absence from Christ, and yet never to lament it? Hath not Christ been thirty days and more in heaven, without a visit from you? And yet for all this ye have not clothed yourselves with sackcloth. I will not say that this is an undeniable evidence of the total want of the grace of faith, but it doth evidently prove this, that the person who hath come this length, has lost much of his primitive love, and much of that high esteem which he ought to have of matchless Christ: what can you find in this world, that maketh you converse so little with heaven? I think that is the noble encouragement of a Christian, when he is going down to his grave, that he hath this wherewith to comfort himself; 'I am to change my place, but not my company;' death, to the believing Christian, being a blessed transition and transportation to a more immediate and constant uninterrupted enjoyment of God. But I believe, that if all who have the name of believers in this generation should go to heaven, they might have this to say, I am now not only to change my place, but also my company; for these seventy years I have been conversant with my idols, but now I am to converse with more blessed, divine, and excellent company. O that ye would be persuaded to pursue much after an absent Christ. Were it not a sweet period of our life, to breathe out our last breath in his arms, and to be living in the faith of being eternally with him, which might be founded upon his word?

II. There is this second evidence of one that is in the faith; they do endeavour to advance that necessary work of the mor-

tification of their idols, according to that word, 1 John iii. 4. 'Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure.' Acts xv 9 'Faith purifieth the heart.' And concerning this evidence (lest any should mistake it) I would say these things to you. *First*, The mortification of a Christian, as long as he is here below, doth more consist in resolutions than attainments. It is certain that there are high attainments of a Christian in the mortification of his idols, but his resolutions go far above his performances. *Secondly*, We will say this, that those Christians, who never came this length in Christianity, to make that an universal conclusion, and full resolution, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' they may suspect themselves that they are not in the faith; for a Christian that is in Christ is universal in his resolutions, though he be not so in practice, but defective in performances; a Christian may have big resolutions with weak performances; for resolutions will be at the gate of heaven, before practice come from the borders of hell, there being a long distance betwixt resolution and practice; and the one much swifter than the other And, *Thirdly*, We would likewise say, that ye, who never did know what it was to endeavour (by prayer and the exercise of other duties) the mortification of your lusts and idols; ye may be afraid that ye have not yet the hope of seeing him as he is. And I would say this to many, who are settled upon their lees, and who never did know what it was to spend one hour in secret prayer for mortifying of an idol, that they would beware lest that curse be past in heaven against them; 'I would have purged you, and ye would not be purged, therefore ye shall not be purged any more till ye die;' that iniquity of refusing to commune with Christ in the work of secret mortification, I say that iniquity shall not be purged away. And we would once seriously desire you, by that dreadful sentence that Christ shall pass against you, and by the love ye have to your immortal souls, and by the pains of these everlasting torments of hell; that ye would seriously set about the work of spiritual mortification, that so ye may evidence that ye have believed, and that ye have the soul-comforting hope of eternal life. I would only speak this one word to you (and I desire you seriously to ponder it), What if, within twelve hours hereafter, a summons were given you (without continuation of days) to appear before the solemn and dreadful tribunal of that impartial judge, Jesus Christ? What, suppose ye, would be your thoughts? Will ye examine your own conscience, what think ye would be your thoughts, if some summons were given unto you? I am persuaded of this, 'That your knees should smite one against another, and your face should gather paleness,' seeing

your conscience would condemn you, 'That ye had been weighed in the balance and found light.' O think ye that ye can both fight and triumph in one day? Think ye that ye can fight and overcome in one day? Think ye your lusts and unmortified corruptions so weak and faint-hearted an enemy, that upon the first appearance of such imaginary champions (as most part of us are in our own eyes) that your idols would lay down arms, and let you trample on them? Believe me, mortification is not a work of one day, or one year, but it is a work will serve you all your time, begin as soon as you will: and therefore seeing you have spent your days in the works of the flesh, it is time that now ye would begin and pursue after him, whose work is with him, and whose reward shall come before him.

III. Now there is this third evidence by which a Christian may know whether he be in the faith or not, and it is, that Christ is matchless and incomparable unto such a one, according to that word, 1 Pet. ii. 7. 'To you that believe, Christ is precious,' and that word that Luke hath in his 7th chapter at the close, 'That she to whom much was forgiven, loved much.' Now, lest this likewise should prove a discouragement to any, I would only have you take notice to this, that a Christian may be a believer, and yet want the sensible discoveries of this, that Christ is matchlessly precious to him; but this is certain, that they who are in the lively exercise of faith, it is impossible then for them not to esteem Christ matchless And I would speak this likewise to many who are here; have you not been living these ten years in faith? and I would pose you with this, esteem you not your idols more matchless than Christ, and more of worth than he? It is impossible that there can be any lively exercise of faith, and not esteem Christ matchless. It is not to say with your mouth, and contradict it with your heart, will do the business. For if your heart could speak, it would say, I would sell Christ 'for thirty pieces of silver.' But my idols would I sell at no rate. Are there not many of you, who love the world and its pleasures better than the eternity of joy? Oh! know ye not that word (O ye desperately ignorant of the truths of God), 'that he who loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him;' and yet notwithstanding of the light of the word, ye would sell your immortal souls (with Esau) 'for a mess of pottage:' O but it is a poor bargain when ye have sold the eternity of joy for a passing world, and for its transitory delights? I would earnestly know what shall be your thoughts in that day, when ye shall be standing upon the utmost line betwixt time and eternity. O what will be your thoughts at that day? But you are to follow on to an endless pain, (by appearance) and then you are to leave your idols. I shall only

desire, that ye may read that word, Isa. x. 3. 'What will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? To whom will ye flee for help? And where will you leave your glory?' Ye shall then preach mortification to the life, though all the time of mortification shall then be cut off. O but to hear a worldly-minded man, when eternity of pain is looking him in the face (preach out concerning the vanity of this world), might it not persuade you that the world is a fancy, and a dream that shall flee away, and shall leave you in the day of your greatest strait?

IV. And there is this fourth evidence of faith, that a Christian who doth truly believe, he is a Christian who entertaineth a divine jealousy and a holy suspicion of himself, whether or not he doth believe. I love not that faith which is void of fear; this was clear in the practice of believing Noah, that though by faith he built the ark, yet he had fear mixed with his faith. I know that there are some who are ignorant concerning this, what it is to doubt concerning eternal peace; and more, it is not every one that doubteth that certainly shall get heaven; for I think an hypocrite may doubt concerning his eternal salvation; however, I think the exercise of a hypocrite, under his doubtings, is more the exercise of his judgment than the exercise of his conscience. And I may say, that if all the exercise of the law which is preached in these days, were narrowly searched, it would be more the exercise of light than the exercise of conscience. We speak these things as our doubt, which never was our exercise, and we make these things our public exercise, which was never our private chamber exercise. And I think, that if all that a Christian did speak to God in prayer, were his exercise, he would speak less and wonder more. We would be speechless when we go to God; for often, if we did speak nothing but our exercise, we would have nothing to say. And certainly it is true that we often fall into that woful sin, of desperate lying against the Holy Ghost, by flattering God with our mouth, and lying unto him with our tongue. And I shall only say these two words, there are some who have this for their great design, *viz.* they would be at peace with their conscience, and also they would be at peace with their idols, they would gladly reconcile conscience and their idols together, that is their great design. And there are some whose design is a little more refined, they study rather to be reconciled with their conscience, than to be reconciled with God; the great aim they shoot at is this, To get their consciences quieted, though they know not what it is to have the soul-comforting peace of God to quiet them.

V. Now there is this last evidence of faith, that justifying faith is a faith which putteth the Christian to be much in the exercise

of those duties, by which it may be maintained. for we must keep faith as the 'apple of our eye! and for that end, I would only give you these three things by which faith must be kept in exercise, and a real Christian will be endeavouring, in some measure, to attain unto these.

1. It keepeth faith much in exercise, to be much in marking and taking notice of the divine exercise and proofs of the love of God, wherewith a Christian doth meet; as is clear from that word, Rom. v 4. 'Experience worketh hope.' I durst be bold to charge the most part that are indeed in Christ with this, that they are too little remarking and taking notice of the experience of his love. Ye should mark the place of your experience itself: as is clear from scripture, that the very place where Christians did meet with experience, in such an enjoyment of God, they marked it, Ezek. i. 1. 'By the river of Chebar the heavens were opened, and I saw the vision of God.' And Gen. xxxii. 30. 'Jacob called the place Peniel,' the place of living, after seeing the face of God: it was so remarkable unto him. And we conceive, that ye would mark these two things mainly in your practice: *First*, Ye would mark, if ye can possibly, the first day of your closing with Christ, and of your coming out of Egypt, and may allude unto the command (if not more than allude unto it) Deut. xxvi. 1. 'Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee out of the land of Egypt.' And, *Secondly*, We would have you much in marking these experiences which have increased your faith, and which have strengthened your love, and which have made you mortify your idols; these are experiences especially to be marked.

2. Faith is kept in exercise, and we win to the lively assurance of our interest in God: which we would press upon you, by being much in the exercise of secret prayer. O but many love much to pray when abroad, who never loved to pray when alone. And this is a desperate sign of hypocrisy, according to that, Matth. vi. 5. It is said of hypocrites, they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they might be seen of men: but it is never said of these persons, that they love to pray alone, only they loved to pray in the synagogues; but it is secret and retired prayer, by which faith must be kept in exercise.

And there is this likewise that we would press upon you, that ye would be much in studying communion and fellowship with God so that your faith may be kept in life. And O what a blessed life were it, each day to be taken up to the top of mount Pisgah, and there to behold that promised land, to get a refresh-

ing sight of the crown every morning, which might make us walk with joy all along that day? The heart of a Christian to be in heaven, his conversation ought to be there, his eyes ought to be there. And I know not what of a Christian ought to be out of heaven, even before his going there, save his lumpish tabernacle of clay, which cannot inherit incorruption, till he be made uncorruptible. But I shall say no more but this, many of us are readier to betray him with a kiss, and crucify him afresh, than to keep communion with him: 'But wo eternally be to him by whom the Son of man is betrayed, and that doth crucify Christ afresh; it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the depth of the sea. I remember an expression of a man not two days ago, who, upon his deathbed, being asked by one what he was doing; did most stupidly, though most truly, reply, That he was fighting with Christ; and I think that the most part of us (if he prevent us not) shall die fighting with Christ: but know, and be persuaded, that he is too sore a party for us to fight with, 'He will once tread upon you in the wine-press of his fury, and he shall return with dyed garments from treading such of you as would not embrace him; he shall destroy you with all his heart. Therefore be instructed, lest his soul be disjoined from you (as that word in Jer. vi. 8.), and lest your souls be eternally separated from him,' be, I say, instructed to close with him by faith. Now, to him who can make you do so, we desire to give praise.

In the two sermons next following, you have the rest of these sweet purposes, which the worthy Author preached upon the same text.

SERMON IV.

1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son, JESUS CHRIST, &c.*

THERE are two great rocks upon which a Christian doth ordinarily dash in his way and motion toward his rest. 1. The rock of presumption and carnal confidence: so that when Christ dandleth them upon his knees, and satisfieth them with the breast of his consolations, and maketh their cup to overflow, then they cry out, 'My mountain standeth strong, I shall never be moved. And 2. The rock of misbelief and discouragement: so that, when he hideth his face, and turneth back the face of his throne, then they cry out, 'Our hope and our strength

'is perished from the Lord,' we know not what it is to bear our enjoyments by humility, nor our crosses by patience and submission. O but misbelief and jealousy are bad interpreters of dark dispensations, they know not what it is to read these mysterious characters of divine providence, except they be written in legible letters of sense; misbelief is big with child of twins, and is travailing, till it bring forth apostacy and security; and no doubt he is a blessed Christian that hath overcome that woful idol of misbelief, and doth walk by that royal law of the word, and not by that changeable rule of dispensations. We conceive that there are three great idols and dagons of a Christian, that hindereth him from putting a blank in Christ's hand concerning his guiding to heaven, there is pride, self-indulgence, and security. Do we not covet to be more excellent than our neighbour? Do we not love to travel to heaven through a valley of riches? and do we not ambitiously desire to walk towards Sion, sleeping, rather than weeping, as we go? Are there not some words that we would have taken out of the Bible, that is sad divinity to flesh and blood? 'Through many tribulations must we 'enter into the kingdom of heaven:' we love not to be changed from vessel to vessel, that so our scent may be taken from us.

There are three great enemies to Christ, misbelief, hypocrisy, and profanity: misbelief is a bloody sin, hypocrisy is a silent sin, profanity is a crying sin. These are mother evils, and I shall give you these differences betwixt them: misbelief crucifieth Christ under the vail of humility; hypocrisy crucifieth Christ under the vail of love; and profanity putteth him to open shame. Misbelief denieth the love and power of God: hypocrisy denieth the omnisciency of God; and profanity denieth the justice of God. Misbelief is a sin that looketh after inherent righteousness; hypocrisy is a sin that looketh after external holiness only; and profanity is a sin that looketh after heaven without holiness; making connexion between those things that God hath always separated, and separating those things which he hath always put together: so that their faith shall once prove a delusion, and fly away as a dream in the night, but let us study this excellent grace of true and saving faith, which shall be a precious remedy against all those Christ-destroying and soul-destroying evils.

But now to come to that which we did propose, *Thirdly*, to be spoken of from the words, which was the sweetness of this grace of faith; no doubt, it is a pleasant command, and it maketh all commands pleasant, it is that which casteth a divine lustre upon the most hard sayings of Christ, and maketh the Christian to cry forth, 'God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice.' We need not stand long to show that faith is a sweet and refreshing

command, for it is oftentimes recorded in scripure to the advantage of this grace; and unspeakable joy and heavenly delight are the hand-maids that wait upon it But more particularly to make it out, we shall speak to these things. The *First* is, That this grace giveth a Christian a broad and comprehensive sight of Christ, maketh him not only to behold the beauty of his actings, but the beauty of his person; and there are these three precious sights that faith giveth to a Christian of Christ: *First*, It letteth the Christian see Christ in his absolute and personal excellency, taking him up as the eternal Son of God, as the Ancient of Days, as the Father of eternity, 'as the express image of his Father's 'person, and brightness of his glory,' and this filleth the soul with divine fear and admiration. Hence is that word, Heb. xi. 27. 'That we see by faith him that is invisible. As if he had said, faith is that grace that maketh things that are invisible, visible unto us. *Secondly*, It letteth the soul see Christ in his relative excellencies, that is, what he is to us; faith taketh up Christ as a husband, and from thence we are provoked to much boldness and divine confidence, and withal, to see those rich possessions that are provided for us by our elder brother, who was born for adversity; faith taketh up Christ as a blessed days-man that did lay his hand upon us both; and from thence is constrained to wonder at the condescendency of Christ, it taketh him up as dying and as redeeming us from the power of the grave, and from the hands of our enemies: and this provoketh Christians to make a total and absolute resignation of themselves over unto Christ, 'To serve him all the days of our life, in righteousness and holiness. And, *Thirdly*, Faith maketh the soul to behold these mysterious draughts of spotless love, those divine emanations of love that have flowed from his ancient and everlasting love since the world began. Would ye know the great ground why we are so ignorant of him, who is the study of angels, and of all that are about the throne? It is this, we are not much in the exercise of faith. And if we would ask that question, What is the way to attain to the saving knowledge of God in Christ? We would give no answer to it but this, Believe, and again believe, and again believe: faith openeth these mysterious seals of his boundless perfection, and in some way teacheth a Christian to answer that unanswerable question, 'What is his name, and what is his son's name?'

There is this *Secondly* that pointeth out the sweetness of faith, that it giveth an excellent relish unto the promises, and maketh them food to our soul. What are all the promises without faith (as to our use), but a dead letter that hath no life; but faith exercised upon the promises, maketh a Christian cry out, 'The words of his mouth are sweeter unto me than the honey and the honey-

comb,' as is clear from Heb. xi. 12, 13. It is by faith that we embrace the promises, and do receive them.

Thirdly, The sweetness of faith may appear by this, that it enableth a Christian to rejoice under the most anxious and afflicting dispensations that he meeteth with while he is here below; as is clear from Rom. v. 1. 5. where his being justified by faith hath this fruit attending it, to joy in tribulation; and likewise from Heb. x. 34. 35. Doth not faith hold the crown in the right-hand, and letteth a Christian behold the infinite dignities that are provided for them, after they have, as a strong man, run their race? And when a Christian is put into a furnace hot seven times more than ordinary, it bringeth down the Son of man, Jesus Christ, to walk with them in the furnace; so that they walk safely, and with joy through fire and water, and, in a manner, they can have no cross in his company. For would ye know what is the description of a cross? It is to want Christ in any estate. And would ye know what is the description of prosperity? It is to have Christ in any condition or state of life: What can ye want that have him? And what can ye have that want him? He is that All; so that all things beside him are but vanity. But besides this, faith doth discover unto a Christian, that there is a sweet period of all his trials and afflictions that he can be exposed unto, so that he can never say that of faith, which Ahab spake of Micaiah, 'He never prophesied good things unto me.' But rather he may say always the contrary, Faith never prophesied evil unto me, it being a grace that prophesieth excellent things in the darkest night, and sweetly declareth, that though 'weeping do endure for the evening, yet joy cometh in the morning;' and that, though now they go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, yet at last they shall return rejoicing, bearing sheaves in their bosom.

And this may bring in the *Fourth* consideration; to point put the sweetness of faith, that giveth a Christian a refreshing sight of that land that is afar off, and maketh him to behold that inheritance that is provided for the saints in light; it goeth forth to the brook Eshcol, and there doth pluck down those grapes that grow in Immanuel's land, to bring up a good report of that noble country we are sojourning towards, and the city, the streets whereof are paved with transparent gold. And, howbeit, it may be a perplexing debate between many and their own souls, whether or not these eyes that have been the windows through which so much uncleanness have entered, and these species of lusts have been conveyed into the heart, shall once be like the eyes of a dove washed with milk, and fitly set; and be admitted to see that glorious object, 'The Lamb that sitteth up-

on the throne:' or whether ever these tongues, that have been set on fire of hell; and these polluted lips, that have spoken so much against God and heaven, and all his people and interests, shall ever be admitted to sing those heavenly hallelujahs amongst that spotless choir of angels, and that assembly of the first born or if these hands or feet that have been so active to commit iniquity, and so swift to run after vanity, shall ever be admitted hereafter to carry those palm branches, and to follow the Lamb wheresoever he goeth; and whether ever these hearts that have been indeed a Bethaven, a house of idols, may yet, notwithstanding, be a dwelling for the Holy Ghost. Though these things, we say, and such like, may be the subject of many sad debates to some weary souls, and cause many tossings to and fro till the morning; yet faith can bring all these mysteries to light, and looking within the vail, can let us see thousands of thousands, who were once as ugly as ourselves, 'yet now, having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, are admitted to stand before the throne of God, and serve him day and night.'

Now there is that, *Fourthly*, which we promise to speak of concerning this grace of faith from these words, and it is the absolute necessity there is of the exercise of this grace which is holden forth in that word, 'His commandment;' which doth import these three things, 1. That all the commands that we can obey without this commandment of faith, is but a polluting ourselves in the ditch till our own clothes abhor us. 2. That God taketh greater delight in the exercise of that grace of faith, than in the exercise of any other grace. And, *Lastly*, that as to the many imperfections which we have in our obedience, there is a sweet act of oblivion past of them all, if we make conscience seriously to obey this command of faith, which is indeed the sweet compend of the gospel; all these things do most clearly appear, in that believing here is called, 'His commandment,' by way of excellency, as if this were his only commandment.

But that we may yet a little more particularly point out the absolute necessity of faith, there are these things that speaketh it forth to the full, 1. That though rivers of tears should run down our eyes, because we kept not his law, though we should never rise off our knees from prayer, and should all our life-time speak to God with the tongue of angels, and though we should constantly obey his commands, yet without faith we should never escape that eternal sentence of excommunication from the presence of the Lord: there being no action that doth proceed from us which can please the majesty of the Lord, unless it hath its rise from this principle of faith; as is clear from Heb. xi. 6.

'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' And though we should offer unto him ten thousand rivers of oil, and thousands of rams, and should offer up in a burnt-sacrifice all the beasts that are upon the mountains, and the trees that are upon many hills, this would be the answer that God would return unto us, 'Who hath required these things at your hand? I take no pleasure in these solemn sacrifices;' because there is no way of attaining peace with God, but through the exercise of faith, making use of the spotless righteousness of Christ. 2 Let us do our utmost, by all the inventions we can, to bring down our body, and let us separate ourselves from all the pleasures of the flesh; yet all our idols shall reign without much contradiction, except once we do attain unto this grace of faith, which is that victory, 'whereby we must overcome the world,' and the hand which maketh use of infinite strength for subduing our corruption maketh the Christian sweetly to take up that song, 'Stronger is he that is with us, than he that is in the world.'

From all this that we have said, both of the sweetness of faith, and of the necessity thereof, we would propose these few considerations to two or three sorts of persons, 1. There are some who live in that vain imaginary delusion of attaining heaven through a covenant of works, and neglect to seek salvation by faith in the righteousness of Christ. And to those who build upon this sandy foundation, I shall say but these two words, *First*, How long shall you labour in the fire of airy vanity? Do you never think to put on the cape-stone? Know ye not that the day is approaching, when your houses shall fall about your ears, your confidence shall be rejected, and 'your hope shall evanish as a dream, and flee away as a vision of the night?' *Secondly*, What a monstrous blindness, and what an unspeakable act of folly must it be, to say, That Christ was crucified in vain? Which yet we do practically assert when we go about to purchase a righteousness through the works of the law.

2. There are some who are secure in their own thoughts concerning their faith; they never questioned the reality of it, they never examined it. O! ye whose faith is cold as yourselves, ye say ye never knew what it was to dispute, and I may say ye never knew what it was to believe. Thou profane hypocrite, let me tell thee a strong faith, and yet strong idols, must needs be a strong delusion. Thou wilt not obey the Lord, thou wilt not pray, thou wilt not believe a threatening in all the word, thou wilt count all religion madness and foolishness, and yet thou wilt persuade thyself thou believest in Christ. 'O be not deceived, God is not mocked:' and why will ye mock yourselves? Shall I tell you that reprobates have a sad religion; one day they must

believe, obey, and pray, and give testimony to godliness; but alas, too late, and little to their advantage. Shall not they, whom all the ministers on earth could scarcely ever persuade to believe so much as a heaven or a hell, or one threatening in all the book of God, at last be forced to believe their own sense, when they shall see the Ancient of Days upon the throne, and shall hear the cries of so many thousand living witnesses come out both from heaven and hell, bearing testimony to the truth of threatenings and promises, that not one jot of them is fallen to the ground? And he who would never be persuaded to bow a knee to God in earnest all his life, shall he not then pray with greatest fervency, 'That hills and mountains might fall upon him, to cover him from the face of the Lamb? And he that would never submit to a command of God, must he not at last obey that dreadful command, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting torment, &c.' Yea, he who was the greatest mocker in the world, shall then confess, that they are blest who put their trust in the Lord, as they are excellently brought in, though in an Apocryphal book, Wisdom v 4 Crying out with great terror, while they behold that unexpected sight of the glorious condition of the godly, 'O here are the men,' say they, 'whom we mocked, whose life we accounted madness, and their end dishonourable:' be wise therefore in time, and do that willingly, which ye must do by constraint, and do that with sweetness and advantage that ye must do at length with loss and sorrow.

8. There are some who certainly have some hope of eternal life. but contenteth themselves with a small measure of assurance, and these I would beseech, that ye would be more endeavouring to make your calling and election sure, and would be endeavouring to see your names written in the ancient records of heaven: and this we shall press upon you by several arguments, 1. Those strong and subtile, and soul-destroying delusions that are amongst many, who conceive they do believe, as we were saying, and 'are pure in their own eyes, who are not yet purged from their iniquities.' O! are there not many of us that are in a golden dream, that suppose 'we are eating, but when we awake our soul is empty, whose faith is a metaphysic notion that hath no foundation, but men's apprehension? and this shall never bear us through the gates of death, nor convey us unto an eternity of joy. 2. May not this press you to follow after assurance? It is a compendious way to sweeten all your crosses; as is clear from Hab. iii. 17, 18, where the convictions of this made Habakkuk 'to rejoice in the God of his salvation, though the fig-tree did not bear fruit, and the labour of the olive did fail, and there were no sweetness to be found in the vine;' and from Heb. xi. 34.

where they took joyfully 'the spoiling of their goods, knowing within themselves, that they had a better and an enduring substance;' this is indeed that tree, which, if we cast into the waters of Marah, they will presently become sweet, for it is not below the child of hope to be anxious about those things that he meets with here, when he sincerely knoweth that commandment shall come forth; 'Lift up your head, for the day of your eternal redemption draweth near,' even the day when all the rivers of his sorrow shall sweetly run unto the ocean of everlasting delight. 3. A Christian, that is much in assurance, is much in communion and fellowship with God; as is clear from Song i. 13, 14. and Song ii 3. where, when once she cometh to that, to be persuaded that Christ was her beloved, then 'she sat down under his shadow, and his fruit was pleasant unto her taste;' for the assured Christian doth taste of those crums that fall from that higher table; and, no doubt, those who have tasted of that old wine will not straightway desire the new, because the old is better. And then, 4th. It is the way to keep you from apostacy, and maketh defection from God; faith is that grace which will make you continue with Christ in all his temptations; as is clear from 2 Pet. i. 10. where this is set down as a fruit 'of making our calling and election sure, that if we do these things we shall never fall;' faith makes a Christian to live a dependent life; for would ye know the motto of a Christian, it is this, self-diffidence and Christ dependence; as is clear from that word in the Song viii. 5. that while we are walking through the wilderness, 'we are leaning upon our well-beloved.' 5. This assurance will help a Christian to overcome many temptations. There are four sorts of temptations that assault the Christian; there are temptations of desire, temptations of love, temptations in hope, and temptations of anxiety, all which a Christian, through this noble grace of assurance, may sweetly overcome; he that hath once made Christ his own, what can he desire but him; as Psalm xxvii. 4. 'One thing have I desired of the Lord;' what can he love more than Christ, or love besides Christ; all his love being drowned, as it were in that ocean of his excellencies, and a sweet complacency found in the enjoyments of him. And as to hope, will not assurance make a Christian cry forth, 'Now Lord what wait I for; my hope is in thee.' And when the heart is anxious, doth not assurance make a Christian content to 'bear the indignation of the Lord,' and patiently submit unto the cross, since there is a sweet connexion between his cross and his crown, Rom. viii. 35, 36 'If he suffer with him, he shall also reign with him.' And *Lastly*, There is this argument to press you to assurance, that it sweeteneth the thoughts of death; it maketh death unto a

Christian not the king of terrors, but the king of desires; and it is upon these grounds that assurance maketh death refreshful to a Christian. 1. He knoweth that it is the funeral of all his miseries, and the birth-day of all his blessings and eternal enjoyments. This is the coronation day of a Christian, and the day when he shall have that marriage betwixt Christ and him sweetly solemnized; and that when he is to step that last step, he knoweth that death will make him change his place, but not his company; and O that we could once win unto this, to seal that conclusion without presumption, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' we might, without presumption, sing one of the songs of Sion, even while we are in this strange land, and taking Christ in our arms, might sweetly cry forth, 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!' Comfort yourselves in this, that all your clouds shall once pass away, and that truth shall once come to pass, which was confirmed by the oath of an angel, with his hand lifted up toward heaven, 'That time shall be no more.' Time shall once sweetly die out in eternity, and ye may be looking after new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' O long to be with him, for Christ longeth to have you with him.

SERMON VI.

1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son,* JESUS CHRIST, &c.

THERE are three most precious and cardinal graces, which a Christian ought mainly to pursue; there is that exalting grace of faith, that comforting grace of hope, and that aspiring grace of love: and if once a Christian did take up that heavenly difference that is between these sister graces, he might be provoked to move after them most swiftly, as the chariots of Aminadab; and there is this difference between these graces; faith is a sober and silent grace; hope is a patient and submissive grace; love is an ambitious and impatient grace; faith crieth out, 'I will wait patiently for the Lord, until the vision shall speak.' But love crieth out, 'How long art thou a coming?' and it is waiting to hear the sound of his feet coming over the mountains of separation. This is the motto of hope, *Quod defertur non aufertur;* That which is delayed, said hope, is not altogether taken away, and made void; and that may be the divine emblem of the grace of love; it is a sight infolding desire in his

arms, and it is desire clothed with wings, treading upon delay and impediments. There is this second difference between these graces; the grace of faith embraceth the truth of the promises: the grace of hope embraceth the goodness of the thing that is promised; but that exalting grace of love embraceth the promiser: faith crieth out, 'Hath he spoken it, he will also do it:' hope crieth out, 'Good is the word of the Lord, be it unto thy servant according to thy promise:' and love crieth with an higher note, 'As is the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my well-beloved among the sons.' *Thirdly*, There is that difference between these graces, faith overcometh temptations; hope overcometh difficulties, and love stayeth at home and divideth the spoil; there is a sweet correspondence between those graces in this; faith fighteth and conquereth; and hope fighteth and conquereth; but love doth enjoy the trophies of the victory. And, *Fourthly*, There is this difference, the noble grace of faith shall once evanish into sight; that noble grace of hope shall once evanish into possession and enjoyment; but that constant grace of love shall be the eternal companion of a Christian, and shall walk in with him to the streets of the new Jerusalem. And I would ask you that question, What a day shall it be, when faith shall cede with sight? What a day shall it be, when hope shall yield its place to love, and love and sight shall eternally sit down, and solace themselves in these blessed mysteries, these everlasting consolations of heaven, world without end. And, *Fifthly*, There is this difference, less will satisfy the grace of faith and the grace of hope, than will satisfy the grace of love; faith will be content with the promise, and hope will be content with the thing that is promised; but that ambitious grace of love will only be content with the promiser: love claspeth its arms about that precious and noble object Jesus Christ; love is a suspicious grace. It oftentimes crieth forth, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where 'they have laid him:' so that faith is oftentimes put to resolve suspicions of love. I can compare these three graces to nothing so fitly, as to those three worthies that David had. These three graces, they will break through all difficulties, were it an host of Philistines, that so they may please Christ, and may drink of the well of Bethlehem, the well of everlasting consolation that floweth from beneath the throne of God: love is like Noah's dove, it never findeth rest for the sole of its foot, until once it be within the ark, that place of repose, Jesus Christ

And, *Sixthly*, There is this last difference between them, faith taketh hold upon the faithfulness of Christ; hope taketh hold upon the goodness of Christ; but love taketh hold upon the

heart of Christ. And think ye not that it must be a pleasant and soul-refreshing exercise, to be continually taken up in embracing him, that is the eternal admiration of angels? Must it not be an excellent life, daily to be feeding on the finest of the wheat, and to be satisfied with honey out of the rock? O but heaven must be a pleasant place! and if once we would but taste of the first ripe grapes, and a cluster of wine that groweth in that pleasant land, might not we be constrained to bring up a good report of it?

But now to come to that which I promised mainly to speak of at this time, the last thing concerning faith that we proposed from the words, was the object upon which faith exerciseth itself, which is here set down to be the name of his Son, Jesus Christ. First, speak a little to the negative, what things are not the fit object of faith, and then to the positive, showing how this name of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ, is that sure ground upon which a Christian may pitch his faith: For the First, Ye must know that a Christian is not to build his faith upon sense, nor sensible enjoyments. Sense may be an evidence of faith, but it must not be the foundation of faith: I know there are some that oftentimes cry out, 'Except I put my finger into the print 'of the nails, and thrust my hand into the hole of his side, I will 'not believe;' and indeed it is a mystery unto the most part of us, to be exercising faith upon a naked word of promise, abstractly from sense; to love an absent Christ, and to believe on an absent Christ, are the two greatest mysteries of Christianity. But that sense is no good foundation for faith, may appear, 1. That faith, which is builded upon sense, is a most inconstant, a most fluctuating and transient faith I know sense hath its fits of love, and, as it were, hath its fits of faith; sometimes sense is sick of love, and sometimes sense is strong in faith; but ere six hours go about, sense may be sick of jealousy, and sick of unbelief; as you will see from Psalm xxv. 6. Sense, that bold thing, will instantly cry out, 'My mountain standeth strong, I will never be moved;' but behold how soon it changeth its note, 'Thou hidest thy face, and I was troubled.' At one time it will cry forth, 'Who is like unto him that pardoneth iniquity, and that passeth over transgressions?' But ere many hours go about, it will sing a song upon another key, and cry out, 'Why art thou become unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?' 1. That faith which is built upon sense, it wanteth the promise of blessedness, for this is annexed to believing, that it is founded upon the word, according to that in John xx. 29. 'Blessed are those that have not seen and yet have believed.' Nor hath that faith, which is built upon sense, such a solid joy waiting on it, as faith that is built upon

the naked word of promise; as may be cleared from that word, 1 Pet. i. 8. where faith exerciseth itself upon Christ not seen, maketh a Christian 'to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,' a joy that doth not attend believing, founded upon sense. 3. That faith that is built upon sense, it giveth not much glory to God, for faith that is built upon sense, it exalteth not the faithfulness of God, it exalteth not the omnipotency of God. I will tell you what is the divinity of sense; let me see, and then I will believe; but it knoweth not what it is to believe upon trust, and because 'the Lord hath spoken in his holiness,' and in effect; faith that is built upon sense, is no faith, even as Rom. viii. 24. 'Hope that is seen, is not hope;' and therefore when the Lord seeth a Christian making sense an idol, that he will not believe, but when he seeth and feeleth, this doth often provoke the majesty of the Lord to withdraw himself from the Christian, and to deny him that sweet influence of heaven, and those consolations that are above, so that, in an instant, he hath both his sense and his faith to seek.

2. A Christian is not to make his graces the object of his faith; that is, when a Christian doth behold love burning within him, when he doth behold influences to prayer increasing, and mortification waxing strong, he is not to build his faith upon them; this was condemned in the church, in Ezek. xvi. 14. compared with the 15 verse, 'I made thee perfect with my comeliness: but the use that thou didst make of it, thou didst put thy trust in thy beauty, and then thou didst play the harlot.' It is certain that that grace, when it is the object of our faith, it doth provoke God to blast the lively exercise thereof, and to make a Christian oftentimes have that complaint, 'Wo to me, my leanness, my leanness testifieth to my face.' 'I will tell you three great mysteries in Christianity about grace: The First is, to red marches between these two, not to deny what they have, and yet to be denied to what they have, many times there is grace-denying and not self-denying; but this that we would press upon you, to be denied to grace, according to that word which is recorded of Moses, 'his face did shine, and he knew it not;' he did misken it (as it were) and was not at all puffed up with it; for so the words we conceive may run. Secondly, It is a great difficulty for a Christian to be denied to his self-denial, to be humbled in his being humble; for if pride can have no other foundation, it will build itself upon humility; and a Christian will grow proud in this, that he is growing humble. Thirdly, It is a difficulty for a Christian to examine his growth in grace, and not to be puffed up; it is certain, a Christian ought to examine his growth in grace humbly, according to that, Psalm lxiii. 8. 'My soul fol-

loweth hard after thee, thy right hand upholdeth me.' He doth not only take notice of this, that his soul did follow after God; but of the measure of that pursuit, 'My soul followeth hard after thee,' and yet sweetly acknowledgeth, it was not his own feet which carried him, nor his own hand that kept him from falling.

3. Ye are not to build your faith upon your works, and upon the righteousness of the law; I need not stand long to refute that practical popery that is amongst us, that thinketh we can go to heaven through a covenant of works. I told you not long since, what your going to heaven through a covenant of works speaketh, even this horrid blasphemy, that it was an act of monstrous folly to send Christ to die for sinners: for if you can go to heaven without him, was not then Christ crucified in vain? And I would tell you now, that this speaketh out your damnable ignorance of the weakness and deceitfulness of your own hearts. O ye that are so great defenders of salvation by the covenant of works, I beseech you, What is the reason that you break the covenant of works oftener than any? for there is none that thinketh they will go to heaven this way, but those that are the greatest breakers of the covenant of works. And is not that inconsistent, and contradictory divinity, your faith contradicting your practice, and your practice telling you that your faith is a lie?

4. We must not mix our own righteousness with Christ's as the object of our believing: this is indeed an evil that often lodgeth in the bosom of the most refined hypocrite, when Satan cannot prevail to exclude Christ altogether, then he is content, with the whorish woman, to divide the child, and let the object of our faith be half Christ, and half self; and the truth is, many of these poor unwise sons, who stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children, do willingly hearken to this overture, for fear it be presumption for such poor wretches to meddle too boldly with the righteousness of Christ; but it were good such weak ones would consider that word, Rom. x. 2. where the Holy Ghost calleth the making use of his righteousness, an act of submission, 'They have not submitted' (saith he)' unto the righteousness of Christ.' O will ye not lay this to heart, that our Lord will take your putting on his righteousness for an act of great humility, and will take your misbelief as a marvellous act of the highest pride and presumption.

5. We are not to make providence the object of our faith. I know there are some that ask the ground of their right to heaven, they will tell us that God has been kind to them all their days; I will only say to such, 'He may be feeding you unto the day of slaughter, and no man knoweth love or hatred by any

thing that is before him.' This much of the object of faith negatively.

And now to speak to it positively, We see the text holdeth out Christ himself, as that excellent and complete object of faith, 'This is his commandment, that webelieveonthe name of his Son;' and thus faith closeth with Christ in a fourfold consideration. *First*, It closeth with God in Christ, not with God immediately and nakedly, for he dwelleth 'in light inaccessible, that no man can approach unto; he is higher than heaven, what can we do? And deeper than hell, what can we know?' Job xi. therefore we must approach unto him through a vail, even the vail of Christ's flesh, Heb. x. 'God is a consuming fire, and of purer eyes than he can behold iniquity:' and therefore we must first cast our eyes upon that blessed Days-man, that laid his hand upon us both; and look upon God as in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and so draw near unto him through a Mediator, 'who is the First and the Last, and he that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore, able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he 'liveth for ever to make intercession for them.' *Secondly*, Faith closeth with Christ, as tendered freely in a covenant of promise. We would have had nothing to do with Christ, if he had not been given of the Father, and offered himself in a free covenant of promise; but he being thus holden forth upon terms of free love (which he doth utterly abominate hire) and so noble a proclamation issued forth under the great seal of heaven, 'that whosoever will, may come and drink of the water of life freely.' Upon this the poor creature draweth near by virtue of a right, and stretching out the arm of most enlarged affections, doth run upon him with that joyful shout, 'My Lord, my God;' and then maketh an absolute resignation of itself to him; which is holden out in the scripture by that sweet expression 'of kissing the Son.' And there are three parts of Christ's blessed body, that the Christian must endeavour to kiss and embrace, the mouth of Christ, the hand of Christ, the feet of Christ; the kissing of his feet importeth the exercise of love; the kissing of his hands, the exercise of subjection; and the kissing of his mouth, the exercise of communion and fellowship with him. *Thirdly*, Faith closeth with Christ as the purchaser and meritorious cause of all the good we receive; he is the person that hath purchased all these things unto us, and there is not one blink of love, there is not the smallest enjoyment that a Christian meeteth with, but it is the price of the blood of Christ: Christ's precious blood was laid down for it. *Fourthly*, Faith closeth with Christ as the efficient and worker of all our mercies; all our enjoyments are from him as the efficient cause; that is, he is the

worker of all these things in us; it is his precious fingers that must accomplish that blessed work of grace, and they are from Christ as the dispenser of these things; Christ is the great steward in heaven, that doth communicate unto believers all the treasures of the higher house: for him hath God the Father sealed. O! but that word which Christ once spake, is much verified by himself, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Christ is that fountain and treasure in whom all our gifts and graces are treasured up: for before the blessing come to believers, they come to Christ as the head; according to that word, 2 Tim. i 9. 'Which grace was given to us in him, before the foundations of the world were laid.' It was given to Christ before the world was made, and for that end, that it might be communicated unto all his members, and so out of his fulness we all receive and grace for grace.

But, *Secondly*, The text holdeth forth more particularly this excellent object of faith, to be the name of his Son, 'that ye believe in the name of his Son.' And there indeed we may be at a stand. It is long since Agur did nonplus all the world with that question, 'what is his name, or what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?' O how little a thing can be known of him! and O how brutish is this generation! that knoweth not so much loss, that might be known of him in such a day of the gospel, but that we may speak a little, according to our weak measure of faith, as closing with the name of Christ, his name is his glorious attributes, by which he revealeth so much of himself in scripture, as poor mortals can take up. We did show you before, that there was three of these that were main pillars of justifying faith, faithfulness, omnipotency, and his infinite love and mercy. And now from these may be answered all the objections of sense, of carnal reason, and of misbelief, arising from convictions of unworthiness. And certain it is, that faith, in all its conflicts, maketh use of the names of Christ. And there is not an objection that a poor tempted soul can make, but faith can make an answer to it, out of some of the excellent names of God, or of his Son Christ. It would be a more longsome work than I intend to let you see this in all; but I shall only instance that in one glorious name of God, by which he proclaimeth his glory, Exod. xxxiv. 6. 7. 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, &c.' I think there are seven ordinary objections which may be answered from that place. *First*, It is an ordinary objection which misbelievers do make, that they are under the strength of their corruption, that they

are black as the tents of Kedar, and not beautiful as the curtains of Solomon; and doth not the first letter of that name answer this, 'That he is a merciful Lord?' The one importing his ability to save, and to bring down every high imagination: The other importing his infinite delight to help those who have no strength, and are under the power of their adversaries, the power of God being of no larger extent than his love. There is that *Second* objection of misbelief, that we have nothing to commend us to Christ; but all we have to boast of, are infirmities and imperfections; and this is abundantly answered from that second letter of his name, 'that he is gracious,' which importeth the freedom of the dispensations of his love, that he walketh not with us according to that rule of merit, but according to that golden and excellent rule of love. It is a great dispute, whether mercy or grace be the greatest wonder, whether the love of Christ or the freedom of it, be the greatest mystery. Sure both these put together make up a matchless wonder. *Thirdly*, Misbelief will object, that we have forsaken him days without number, and that we cannot trace back our apostacy unto the first day of its rise; and is not that abundantly answered from that letter of his name, 'that he is long-suffering?' This being that glorious attribute in God, the glory of which he desireth to magnify above all his names. *Fourthly*, Misbelief doth ordinarily propose this objection, that we have multiplied our transgressions, and have committed whoredom under every green tree; and have given gifts to our lovers, even hiring our idols; so that we may take up that lamentation, is not our sin great, and our transgressions infinite? And is not this an answer from that letter of his name, 'that he is abundant in goodness?' That though sin abound in us, yet grace doth much more superabound in him. We confess, indeed, that there are some who may walk under thatcondition, that if they had no other exercise throughout eternity, but to make confession, they might confess, and never make any needless repetition; and truly, in some respect, it is a mercy that we are mysteries unto ourselves; for if we did know completely the seven abominations of our hearts, and those mysterious actings of the body of death, we would be in hazard to choose strangling and death rather than life; yet may not one glimpse of that abundant goodness satisfy us, and calm the storm? *Fifthly*, Saith misbelief, We know that we have broken our vows and covenants with God, and that all these things that we have taken on, have been but as flax before the fire of temptation, so that we have no hope that he will have mercy upon those that have broken wedlock, and have not been stedfast in his covenant; but is not that abundantly answered from that letter of his name,

'that he is abundant in truth?' which speaketh thus, That though we deny ourselves, yet he abideth faithful, and doth not alter the words that hath gone out of his mouth. It is the infinite blessedness of men, that though they be changeable, yet they have to do with one that is an unchangeable being. *Sixthly*, There is that objection, That notwithstanding all these things are matters of encouragement to some, yet they know not whether or not the lot of everlasting love have fallen upon them, and whether their names be in the ancient records of heaven. But this is answered from that letter of his name, 'He keepeth mercy for thousands;' which sheweth us that great number of those upon whom the lot of everlasting love shall fall; and if there were no other sentence in all the scripture, this might be a sufficient matter of a song, and might make us cry out, 'Who is like unto him, whose compassions have no end? and who desires to magnify his mercy above all his works.' And, *Lastly*, Misbelief maketh this objection, they have sinned not only against light, not only against vows, not only after much enjoyment of God, but even after the application of the threatening; so that they conceive 'that their Maker will not have mercy upon such.' Yet this is fully answered likewise from that letter of his name, 'he forgiveth iniquity, transgression and sin;' which three words do abundantly speak forth, that there is no transgression which he will not pardon; there being but one particular amongst all that innumerable number of sins which lodgeth in the heart of fallen men, that he declareth unpardonable; and there is none of our diseases that is above the infinite art of love, and concerning which we can take up that complaint, 'there is no balm in Gilead, and there is no physician there.' And though providence may muster up many impossibilities, yet let faith take the promise in one hand, and impossibilities in the other, and desire God to reconcile them, that if we cannot see any connection between providence and the word, yet may we reflect upon the omnipotency of God, that can make things that are seeming contrary, sweetly agree together; the commentary will never destroy the text, nor will providence ever destroy the faithfulness of God. And let me give you this advice, that those objections of misbelief which you cannot answer, and in a manner putteth you to a nonplus, and when ye have looked over all the names of God, ye cannot find an answer to them, slight them, and overcome them, as we have often told you was the practice of believing Abraham, Rom. iv. 19, where that strong objection of misbelief appearing before his eyes, 'the deadness of his body, and the barrenness of Sarah's womb, it is recorded of him, 'he considered not these things,' as it were, he had a divine tran-

sition from the objections of misbelief to the actings of faith: and this is clear from Matthew xv. 25, 26. where that strong objection of misbelief being proposed against that woman, that she was not within the compass of Christ's commission, she hath a noble way of answering with this, 'Lord, have mercy upon me.' And, if so we may speak, faith, a kind of divine impertinency in answering the objections of misbelief, or rather a holy slighting of them that gaineth the victory, when cavilling with temptations, will not do it: the like also may be instanced in his Son's name; "O how glorious titles are given to that Prince of the "kings of the earth, and to that Plant of renown, upon which "the weakest faith may cast anchor, and ride out the greatest "storm;" I shall not detain you long on this subject, but this we would have you know, that there is no strait or difficulty that a Christian can be exposed unto, but there is some name or attribute of Christ that may sweetly answer that difficulty, and make up that disadvantage. If a Christian be exposed unto afflictions and troubles in a present world, let him comfort himself in this, 'That Christ is the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' Is a Christian under inward anxiety and vexation of mind? let him comfort himself in this, 'That Christ is the God of peace, and of all consolation.' Is a Christian under darkness and confusion of spirit? Let him comfort himself in this, 'that Christ is the Father of light, and the eternal Wisdom of God.' Is a Christian under the conviction of this, that he is under the power and dominion of his lusts? Let him comfort himself in this, 'that Christ is redemption;' yea, that I stay no longer, if it were possible that a Christian could have a necessity that he could not find a name in Christ to answer it, he may lawfully frame a name to Christ out of any promise in all the book of God, and he should find it forthcoming for the relieving and making up of that necessity, God will not disappoint his expectation.

There is yet one thing further, in reference to the object of faith, which we shall desire you to take notice of; and it is the way of faith's closing with its noble object, and its resting on him: and this we conceive may be excellently taken up, by our considering of the many several names that faith getteth in scripture, beyond any other of the graces of the Spirit. It is called looking, Isa. xlv. 22. 'Look unto me.' It is called, abiding in Christ, John xv. 4. 'Abide in me.' It is called, a keeping silence unto God, Psalm iii. 7. 'My soul, trust in God:' or as the word is in the original, 'My soul, be silent unto God;' and that in Psalm lxii. 1. 'My soul waiteth:' or as the word is, 'Truly my soul is silent unto God.' Likewise, faith is called a leaning, Psalm vii. 15. 'I have leaned upon thee from my mother's womb.' Faith is called

an 'eating of Christ's flesh, John vi. 53. Faith is called a casting of our burden upon God, Psalm lv. 22. 'Cast your burden upon God:' and faith is called 'a coming unto God,' Matth. xi. 28. And according to these different names, there are seven noble properties, and matchless differences of this grace of faith: The *First* is, That this is the grace by which a Christian doth enjoy much communion with God: hence it is called 'a looking:' which importeth, that faith is a continual contemplation of the immortal soul upon that precious and excellent object, Jesus Christ. There is that *Second* property of faith; That it is that grace by which communion with God is maintained: hence it is called 'an abiding in God. It is that grace that maketh Christ and the believer to dwell together. The *Third* property of faith is, That it is a submissive grace; hence it is called, 'a keeping silence unto God;' faith, as it were, knoweth not what it is to repine; it is the noble excellency of faith, it never knew what it was to misconstruct Christ; it is the noble excellency of faith, it never knew what it was to pass an evil report upon Christ. Faith will promise good things to a Christian in the darkest night, for when love asketh faith that question, Isa. xxi. 11, 12. 'Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? Or, when shall the morning break?' Faith answereth it with these words (only a little inverting the order) "The night cometh, and also "the morning, the morning is approaching, that admitteth of no following night." There is that *Fourth* property of faith, It is the grace that keepeth a Christian in perseverance, by its building uponthe rock. Hence it is called 'a leaning upon God: for a Christian by faith doth perpetually join himself to Christ, so that whatever trouble he be cast into by faith, he cometh out of that wilderness, leaning upon his beloved, and by faith he is led up to the rock that is higher than he, where he may sit in safety, and even laugh at death and destruction when assailing him. There is the *Fifth* property of faith, that it is the grace that bringeth satisfaction unto the spiritual senses of a Christian, by a close particular application of Christ as the nourishment of the soul. Hence it is called 'an eating of the flesh of Christ.' There are three senses that faith satisfieth: faith satisfieth the sense of sight, it satisfieth the sense of taste, and it satisfieth the sense of touch; faith will make a Christian handle that eternal word of life: faith will make a Christian see that noble Plant of renown; and faith will make a Christian taste and see how gracious the Lord is. And, no doubt, those that have once satisfied their sight, they will be longing to satisfy their taste. There is that *Sixth* property of faith, It is that grace which giveth rest unto a Christian: hence it is called, 'A casting of our

burden upon him.' It is, as it were, the soul giving unto Christ that unsupportable yoke of our iniquities, and taking from Christ that easy and portable yoke of his commandments. And Seventhly, There is that last property of faith. It is that grace by which sanctification is promoved: hence it is called 'a coming to Christ;' it is the soul in a divine motion and travelling from the land of Egypt unto the land of Canaan: faith is the soul in a pleasant motion from the land of the north, the land of our captivity, unto the land of perfect liberty, all along going out by "the footsteps of the "flock, and walking in that new and living way, even in him, "who is the way, the truth, and the life."

And now for a more full application of this, we shall speak but to two things further, 1. We would have it considered, that there are some that come unto the covenant of promise with less difficulty, and after a more divine and evangelic way; and there are some that close with Christ in a more difficult and legal way; there are some that before they can come to mount Sion, they must dwell forty days at mount Sinai. There are some, before the decree of heaven shall be given to them, they must roar as an ox, and cover themselves with sackcloth, having ashes upon their heads. We must be a Benoni before we be a Benjamin; that is, we must be a son of sorrow, before we can be a son of consolation. But this is certain, that Christ leadeth sometimes some to himself through a valley of roses; and I would only have you taking notice of these two, which, though we conceive they be not infallible in the rule, yet oftentimes experience maketh them out to be truth: that there are three sorts of persons who are most ordinarily brought under great terrors ere they close with Christ. First, Those who have committed some gross and abominable sin that is most contradicting unto the light of nature. Secondly, That person that sinneth much against light, before conversion. Hence it is observed in all the books of the gospel, and in the book of the Acts, there was more gospel and love in the way of converting the Gentiles, than was of converting the Jews, see Acts ii. 27. There is a sharp law exercised among them who had crucified the Lord of life: and Acts ix. Paul, who had been a grievous persecutor at his conversion, is first stricken dead to the ground before he be made a captive to the love of Christ, and constrained to cry out, 'What wilt thou have me to do? But look to Acts viii. and there you will find a more fair and smooth way of begetting sons to Christ. And Thirdly, That person, who is much in conceit of his own righteousness, he useth to be brought to Christ through much terror and exercise of the law: that is clear in Paul, his condition also Phil. iii. and Acts ix. compared, certainly whosoever thinketh to come

that length in self-abasement, and will count as the apostle doth in that chapter, must dwell many days at mount Sinai, and learn his arithmetic there. 2. We would have you taking notice of this, that though the person that is brought to Christ in a more smooth and evangelic way, may have the pre-eminency of the person that is brought to Christ after a more legal and terrible way in some things; yet we conceive that a Christian that is brought to Christ through much of the exercise of the law, and through many of the thunderings of mount Sinai, after he hath won to see his right of Christ, he is much constant in the exercise of faith; and the reason of it is, because that an ordinary ground of misbelief is our not distinct uptaking either of the time of our conversion, which is oftentimes hid from those persons that are converted in a more evangelic way, as likewise this, that those persons that are brought to Christ in a more gospel chariot, are sometimes put to debate, whether ever they were under the exercise of the law, and this maketh them often (as it were) to raze the foundation, and to cry forth, 'My hope and my strength is perished from the Lord'. And now to shut up our discourse, we shall add this one word of exhortation, that ye would carefully lay hold of that noble object, and exercise your faith upon him; and I shall say but this, that all those that have this noble grace of faith, and that are heirs of that everlasting inheritance, there is a fourfold crown prepared for you. There is a crown of life that is prepared for him that shall fight that good fight of faith; but what may you say is a crown of life, except we have joy waiting upon that life? For what is life without joy, but a bitterness and a burden to itself? Therefore ye shall have a crown of joy; but what were a crown of life, and a crown of joy, except we had the grace of holiness, and were complete in that? Therefore ye shall have also a crown of righteousness. But what were life, joy, and righteousness, without glory? Therefore ye shall have likewise a crown of glory: but what of all these, if that crown should once fall from our head, and we should be deprived of our kingdom? Therefore take this to make up all the rest, it is an eternal crown of glory. That word in Prov xxvii. near to the close, the crown, saith Solomon, doth not endure for ever: but this precious crown that the hands of Christ fixeth upon the head of an overcoming Christian, this is the motto that is engraven upon it, *Unchangeable and eternal, eternal and unchangeable.* And O what a day suppose ye shall that be, when that precious crown shall be put upon our heads? What think ye will be the difference betwixt Christ and the believers in heaven? They shall have these four crowns, which are indeed one; but Christ shall have upon his head many crowns,

according to that word, Rev. xix. 12. But let me say one word also to you who are strangers from God, and are destitute of the grace of Christ, and will not by faith close with this excellent object. There is a fourfold crown that once shall be put upon your heads; but do not misinterpret the vision: there is a difference betwixt the butler and baker; ye may prophesy good things to yourselves, but there is a crown of death which ye shall once have put upon your heads; ye shall be always dying, and yet never able to die: there is a crown of sorrow that ye shall have put upon your heads, when ye shall eternally sigh forth that lamentation, O to be annihilate and reduced into nothing! when the reduction of you into nothing would be a heaven, when ye shall be tormented in those everlasting flames. And I would say this by the way, ye will be all miserable and comfortless one to another, there shall be no ground of consolation that ye shall reap, for the community of your sorrow shall increase the degrees of that sorrow; and there is another crown also that ye shall put on, and that is a crown of sin, instead of that crown of righteousness. Would ye know your exercise, O ye that are predestinate unto these everlasting pains? Would you know your exercise? It is this, ye shall eternally blaspheme and curse the God that made you. I am persuaded of this, that the terrors of hell will afflict you more, and doth, than that of the sinning perpetually in hell; ye would think nothing, many of you, to be in hell, if there were no pain there; for the exercise of sin will be your delight and life; but be persuaded of it, that when your conscience is awakened, the exercise of sinning shall exceedingly aggravate your pain. And there is this crown, *Lastly* that ye shall put on, and that is the crown of shame. The prophet Isaiah maketh mention of a crown of pride, but ye that have put on that crown of everlasting confusion and shame, when ye shall not be able to lift up your eyes to him, whom ye have pierced, I would fain desire you to know what will be your exercise at these three days? What will be your exercise when death shall be summoning you to remove, and ye shall first be entered heirs to these everlasting pains? I am persuaded ye will reflect much. Will ye not reflect upon many sermons that ye have heard, wherein ye have been invited to partake of the sweet offers of salvation? I remember of one, that upon his death-bed cried out, 'A world for time, a world for an inch of time,' one that perhaps did hold his head high, and no doubt was greater than the greatest here. His crown could not purchase an inch of time, but dying with this, 'Call time again, call time again;' that petition was denied; and so shall it be, I fear, to the most part that are here. I think it was a pretty hieroglyphic of the Egyptians, they painted time

with three heads; the first head that pointed out time that was past, was a greedy wolf gaping; which importeth this, that our time past was mispent, and there was nothing left, but like a wolf to gape for it again: and there was that second head of a roaring lion round: which importeth the time present, and for this end was so painted that people might lay hold upon their present opportunities, otherwise it would be the matter of their ruin, and of their eternal undoing. And there was that last head, which was a deceitful dog fanning; which signifies that the people may deceive themselves with the time to come, thinking they will be religious at their death, and that they will overcome at death; but this is a flattery no better than the fanning of a mad dog. I think we may learn much of this, even to be provoked to lay hold upon our golden opportunities, that we sell not our time, but that we buy it. There are two things that a Christian must not sell, that is, sell not the truth, but buy it, and sell not your time, but buy it. I am persuaded of this, that one moment of time is worth ten thousand worlds, if improved; and I would ask you what advantage shall ye have of all things that ye have tormented yourselves about when time shall be no more? I suppose indeed this is an ordinary evil amongst the people of this age, of which we have our own share and portion; there are many that envy godliness, and the godly, 'the excellent ones that are in the earth,' that think it pleasure to vent their malice against such: I know that ordinary practice; it is older by a thousand years than themselves, that they persecute godliness under the name of hypocrisy; they call godliness hypocrisy, and upon that account they begin and speak maliciously against it. I would only ask you this question, what will you say in that day when Christ will ask that question at you, that Gideon asked at Zeba and Zalmunna, Who are these that ye killed with your tongue? Must it not be answered, 'Every one resembled the person of a king:' O will ye not believe? Will ye not close with Christ? I know it is ordinary that we run upon these two extremes. Sometimes we do not believe the threatenings of the law, and sometimes we will not believe the promises of the gospel. But I would only desire to know, what if it had been so ordered in the infinite wisdom of God, that all the letters of this book should have been threatenings? what should have been our lot, if all the promises should have been scraped out of it? But certainly this must be your lot, all the promises of the book of the covenant shall be taken from you, and all the curses thereof shall be a flying roll that shall enter within your houses, and shall eternally there remain. Know this, O ye that are enemies to Christ, know it, and think upon it, 'every battle of the warrior is with confused noise,

and with garments rolled in blood:' but that war which Christ shall have against the hypocrites in Zion, and those that are ignorant of him, and will not close with him, it shall be with fuel of fire and eternal indignation. O what will be your thoughts, suppose you, when Christ shall come with that two-edged sword of the fury of the Lord to enter to fight with you? It is no delightsome exercise: O that ye were not almost but altogether persuaded to be Christians, and that once Christ may conquer you with that two-edged sword that proceedeth out of his mouth, that so you might subject yourselves to him, and make him the object of your faith. Now to him that hath engraven upon his 'vesture, and on his thigh, that he is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords,' we desire to give praise.

TWO SERMONS CONCERNING THE GREAT SALVATION.

SERMON I.

HEB. ii. 3. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.*

THIS everlasting gospel which is preached unto you, is that glorious star, which must lead us to the place where blessed Christ doth lie. This gospel and glad tidings of this great salvation is come near unto you; and Christ is standing at the everlasting doors of your hearts, desiring that ye would open unto him. There is that one great request which heaven this day hath to present unto you, and it is, 'That ye would at last embrace this great salvation freely offered by him.' It is the thing for which ye are called to mourn this day, that since the beginning of your own days, ye have stopped your ears from that sweet and chanting voice of this blessed charmer, 'Ye would never dance to Christ when he piped, neither would ye weep to him when he lamented'

But to come to the words, which we have read to you, the

apostle, in the former chapter, hath been discoursing most divinely of the matchless and incomparable excellencies which are in our blessed Lord Jesus; and in the first verse of this second chapter, he draweth forth an exhortation from his former doctrine, which in short is this, 'That they would take heed to the blessed doctrine of the gospel; and not at any time to let it slip out of your minds:' and that they would keep his gospel as a jewel of great price, and would not sell it, but that they would be induced to buy it. And this exhortation he presseth by two arguments.

The *First* argument is in the second verse, where he saith, 'If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward,' &c. that is, if the transgression of the law, which was delivered by the ministry of angels, and every disobedience to it was so severely punished, let that provoke you to take heed, that ye transgress not the precious gospel which was spoken by the Lord himself.

The *Second* argument is in the words which we have read unto you, and it is taken from the certain and infallible stroke of the justice of God, which shall come upon those who slight this great salvation: it is impossible (saith he) that there can be a city of refuge for those who slight this great salvation.

Now, in the words which we have read, there are these six things to be considered.

I. *First*, That it is an incident to the hearers of this precious gospel and great salvation, to slight and undervalue it. This is clearly presupposed in the words, otherwise there had been no ground, or access for the apostle to threaten so terrible things against the slighters of it.

II. The *Second* thing to be considered in the words is, that the stroke and ruin of those who slight this great salvation, is certain and infallible, it will surely come upon them: this is clear from these words, 'How shall we escape?' As if he had said, there is no imaginable way for us to escape, if we neglect this so great salvation. We may have a city of refuge when we are pursued by the law, or when we are pursued by afflictions, and we may escape when we are pursued otherwise by the justice of God; but if once we slight this great salvation, there remaineth no city of refuge, no door of escape left open for us; for where will the person flee that slighteth so great salvation?

III. There is a *Third* thing whereof we shall take notice from the words, that the stroke of the justice of God cometh justly upon them who slight this great salvation; and truly it is a most equal and reasonable stroke; which is also clear from the words, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Were

he puts it home to their consciences. As if he had said, Think ye not that it is just and righteous, that, if ye slight this great salvation, there should not be a door of escape left open unto you? He putteth the question home to their conscience to answer, yea, or no.

IV. The *Fourth* thing to be considered in the words, is this, That the slighting this great salvation is a sin that hath many aggravations which attend and wait upon it. And it hath two aggravations from the words which I have read: The *First* great aggravation is in the word of the text, 'great salvation.' As if he had said, If it were not a great salvation, ye might have some cloke or excuse for your slighting of it: but seeing it is such a great and eternal salvation, there is now no cloke left for your sin. The *Second* aggravation is from the certainty of this salvation, in these words, 'Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him:' viz. his apostles. Whereby he telleth them, This great salvation is no notion nor fancy, but a most certain, sure, and real salvation, which yet they slight.

V. The *Fifth* thing whereof we shall take notice from the words, is this, That there are no persons, (be who they will, minister or people), who slight this great salvation, that shall have a door of escape; hence it is, that the apostle putteth himself among the rest, saying, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; that is, how shall I Paul escape, if I neglect so great salvation, and so frustrate the grace of God?

VI. *Sixthly*, We would take notice of this from the words, That not only heart-despising of this great salvation, but even also the neglecting of it, hath a certain, infallible, and unspeakable ruin attending upon it.

Now before we speak to any of these *Six* things, which we have observed from the words, there are these two things whereunto we shall speak a little for clearing of the words; *First*, What is meant here by 'great salvation.' *Secondly*, How it is said that Christ was the first preacher of it.

First, We conceive, that by the great salvation, is understood the gospel; as is clear, Eph. i. 13. where it is called 'the gospel of our salvation.' And Acts xiii. 26. it is called 'the word of this salvation:' so that by the word of this salvation, is understood the gospel, and those precious offers which are contained in it. And we conceive, it may be called a great salvation in these eight respects.

I. *First*, It is called the great salvation, in respect of the price that was laid down for it; there being no less a price laid down to purchase this great salvation than the 'blood of the Son of God.'

From whence then doth salvation flow unto you? It comes running to you in a stream of the blood of the Son of God. This is clear, Heb. ix. 12. 'Neither by the blood of goats and calves, 'but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, 'having obtained eternal redemption for us.'

II. *Secondly*, It is called a great salvation, in respect of the many difficulties and oppositions which he had in the way of bringing it about. What great impediments, suppose ye, lay in Christ's way, before he could accomplish and bring about this great salvation? Was not the justice of God to be satisfied? Was he not to die, and be made like unto one of us? Was he not to lie in the grave? And was he not to bear the torments of hell, before this great salvation could be accomplished and brought to pass? There were such impediments in the way of bringing about this great salvation, that if all the angels in heaven had been set to the work, they had been all crushed under it, had it been but that one great impediment, to satisfy the justice, and pacify the wrath of God, even that was a pass, through which none could go but the eternal Son of God; it was so guarded, that none durst adventure to enter it, much less could any win through it, save he only, 'who was mighty to save.'

III. *Thirdly*, It is called a great salvation, in respect of that high estimation which the saints have of it. O what an high estimation have the saints of this gospel salvation? There is no mercy they think comparable to this, all other mercies are but like Zoars, in comparison of this great mercy and gospel salvation.

IV. *Fourthly*, It is called a great salvation, in respect of those noble effects which this salvation bringeth about and produceth. Some of the great effects of the gospel David hath cleared, Psalm xix. 7, 8, 9, 10. Is not this a great effect of this gospel salvation, to bring us out of nature into an estate of grace? And that is an effect of this great salvation. Is not this a great effect, to make us, who are enemies, to become friends? And that is an effect of this great salvation. Is not this a great effect, to make us, who were moving in the way to hell, move in the way to heaven? And that is an effect of this great salvation. Is not this a great effect, to make us, who were far off, to be now made near? And yet this is the effect of this great salvation. And is not that a great effect, to make us, who were darkness, to become light in the Lord? And that is the great effect of this gospel salvation. Yea, I may say, time would fail me, to tell of the great effects of this great salvation. But, O will ye come and see, and that will best resolve the question unto you, what the noble effects of this great salvation are.

V. *Fifthly*, It is called a great salvation, in respect of the great

advantages which redound to the person who embraceth it. *First*, Is not heaven a noble advantage? And that is a gain which attendeth embracers of this great salvation. *Secondly*, Is not Jesus Christ a notable advantage? And yet he is the advantage which attendeth the embracers of this great salvation. *Thirdly*, Is not eternal communion with God a noble advantage? And that advantage attendeth the embracers of this great salvation. *Fourthly*, Is not eternal liberation from the body of death a great advantage? And that attendeth the embracers of this great salvation. *Fifthly*, Is not eternal singing in the enjoyment of God a great advantage? And that attendeth the embracers of this great salvation. *Sixthly*, Is not eternal seeing of God as he is, a great and noble advantage? And yet this (as all the former) attendeth the embracers of this great salvation. Would ye be honourable? Come and embrace this great salvation. Would ye be eternally happy? O then come and partake of this eternal salvation.

VI. *Sixthly*, It is called a great salvation, in respect of all other salvations that ever were accomplished. There was never a salvation, or victory obtained by any general or captain, unto a land or people, that could have the name of great salvation, in comparison of this.

VII. *Seventhly*. It is called a great salvation, in respect of the authority of it. We have spoken of the greatness (as to the meritorious cause) of it, and how great things it doth effectuate; and also in respect of the authority of it, it is a great salvation. Would ye know who is the author of this great salvation? It is Christ, Heb. v. 9. 'He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.' And must not this salvation be suitable to him who is the author of it? This is a most noble and irradiant beam of the majesty of the Son of God, the mediator, that he is the author of this great salvation.

VIII. *Eighthly*, It is called a great salvation, in respect of the continuance and duration of it. It is not a salvation which is but for a day: but it is an eternal salvation, Heb. ix. 12. 'He obtained eternal salvation for us.'

Now the *Second* thing whereunto we shall speak for clearing the words, is this, viz. How is it said that Christ was the first preacher of this eternal salvation. We do not think that the words are thus to be understood, that the gospel, and this great salvation was never preached before Christ came in the flesh; but we think the meaning of the words may be one of these three, if not all of them.

I. *First*, That all the preaching of this great salvation under the law did come very far short in the point of fulness, in comparison of Christ's preaching of it; therefore is Christ said to

be the first preacher of this great salvation; as if he had said, I know Adam, he preached of this great salvation: and Enoch, he preached of this great salvation: and the twelve Patriachs, they preached of this great salvation: and all the prophets who went before Christ, and are now in heaven, they preached of this great salvation; but all their preaching deserved not the name of preaching in comparison of Christ; 'for never man spake as he spake.' Thus Christ was the first preacher of this great salvation.

II. *Secondly*, This may be the meaning of it, That Christ was the preacher of this great salvation, in respect of his clear way of preaching it; for he was the first preacher of it without types and shadows; he was the first preacher of it clearly and fully, with so much demonstration and power of the Spirit.

III. *Thirdly*, The meaning of this, that Christ was the first preacher of this great salvation, may relate to his appearing to Adam in paradise, when he became the first and great preacher of this great salvation, when he did speak that word unto him, 'The seed of the woman shall tread down the head of the serpent.' The first glorious preaching of this great salvation was, when Christ preached it to Adam in paradise. And that was the first and glorious morning of this blessed gospel.

Now we shall speak a little to the first of these six things, which we observed from the words, viz.

That there are many within the visible church, who are neglecters and slighters of this great salvation. Do you not all take with it? It is clear, Matth. xxiii. towards the close; and chap. xxii. 5. where these persons being invited to come to the marriage or feast of the gospel; it is said of them, 'They made light of it;' which are the same words in our text. And Luke xiv. 18. when they were invited to come, it is said, 'They all with one consent began to make their excuse.' And Isa. xxviii. 12. 'This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear.' Now, is there a person here who dare deny this charge, That he is a slighter of this great salvation? I confess, I am afraid that ye will not take with it; therefore I shall suppose eight sorts of persons who are slighters of this great salvation. And I charge you, as ye will answer to God one day, that ye search your hearts, whether ye be among the number (in the catalogue) of the slighters of this great salvation

I. The *first* sort of persons who are slighters of this great salvation, are those persons who go about to establish their own righteousness, and will not submit to the righteousness of Christ; in a word, it is that sort of persons, who think they may win

to heaven by a covenant of works, and will not take the gospel's way of travelling to heaven in the covenant of grace. And surely there is not a person here, who has not that cursed inclination to be as little obliged to Christ, for his salvation, as he can. We would go to heaven without 'the way,' which is Christ. And (believe me) there are many in this congregation, who go thus about to establish their own righteousness. And I shall propose six sorts of persons, who shall fall under the first rank.

1. The *First* sort are those who trust on their own civility, and think these will carry them to heaven. These are the persons who go about to establish their own righteousness. Say they, I defy the world to say any thing to me, I was evermore an honest man, and I trust therefore that I shall go to heaven. But I say to thee, O atheist that thou art, thou shalt never win to heaven by these means, till thou come to Christ with this, 'All my righteousness is as filthy rags.'

2. The *Second* sort are those, who build their confidence upon their denial of their good works, but yet come not this length, to make use of Jesus Christ.

3. The *Third* sort are those, who build their confidence upon their duties; they think they will come to heaven by their good prayers, by their reading, and by their fasting (like unto that Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11. 'I thank God, I am not like other men: for I fast twice in the week, I pay tithes of all that I possess:') but I say unto thee, thy duties will never bring thee to heaven, if Christ be not at the end of all the duties; nor can ye perform any duty without him.

4. The *Fourth* sort of persons, who fall under this first rank of slighters of this great salvation, are those who trust in their own convictions. If they have once been convinced of their sin and miserable estate, they think there is no more to do, Christ will never reject them; so they sit down and build their hope upon these convictions.

5. The *Fifth* sort of persons are those, who build their confidence upon their resolutions. Say they, oftentimes have I resolved to be a better man than I am: therefore I think (which is the fearful delusion of many) that God 'will accept the will for the deed.' But it had been good for many such a word had not been in the Bible, or that their cursed eyes had never read it. But know this, that though thou hast as strong resolutions as Peter, or as good wishes as Balaam had, if you never labour to bring them to practice, God shall say unto thee, 'Depart from me. I know you not.' Any of you who build upon your resolutions, ye built upon a sandy foundation, these being many times a 'goodness but like the morning dew.'

6. And the *Sixth* sort of persons, who fall under the first rank of slighters of this great salvation, and wherein the evil is most subtile, are those who build their salvation upon their graces; these also go about to establish their own righteousness. But I say to thee, thy graces cannot be the foundation of thy hope, although they may be as evidences to strengthen thy hope. Now, are there none here who fall under this first rank of slighters of this great salvation? Or are there none here who will confess that they have gone about to establish their own righteousness? I say to thee, who will confess, put a rope about thy neck, and come to Christ; for he is a merciful King. I say to thee, come to Christ with this, 'All my righteousness is like filthy rags.' And if thou wilt come with this in sincerity, he shall say, 'Bring forth the white robe, and put it upon him.' If thou canst be brought to speak that in sincerity to Christ, there will be no more betwixt Christ and thee, but, 'Come and clothe him with the white robe.'

II. *Secondly*, Those persons slight the great salvation, who delay their taking hold of the precious offers of the gospel; for there are many (when we preach this gospel, and when we hold out the great salvation unto them) who say, 'I will follow Christ, but I must first go home and bury my father;' and so they delay to take hold of this great salvation. But I say to you (whoever ye be) that thus delay to take hold of this great salvation, ye are the slighters of it. Is there a person within these doors, who dare but acknowledge that he hath slighted this great salvation, and delay to embrace it? O tell me! What do your consciences speak? Are there any but they must acknowledge they come under the second rank? And I say to you who have thus delayed, will ye yet embrace it? I say even unto you who are old men (now past sixty years, and have slighted this great salvation so long) yet this day this great salvation is offered unto you. What say you to it? O! what say you to this offer? Are you saying, I must now delay, (and not receive this great salvation) till my harvest be by and over? I say to thee, that the harvest of the wrath of God is ripe, and shall put in his sickle, and cut thee down, I will say no more to thee who thus slights this great salvation, but this, 'Why stand ye all the day in the market-place idle and doing nothing? O will ye at last be induced to take and embrace this great salvation, before it be hid from your eyes?

III. *Thirdly*, Those persons are the slighters of this great salvation, who compliment with Christ when they are invited to come and partake of it, and say silently to the minister, or (rather to their own consciences) 'I pray you have me excused at this time,' as these, Luke xiv. 18. but I would only ask at such

Have ye any lawful excuse, why ye will not come and partake of this great salvation? Is there any person here that hath any lawful excuse to present? I shall never take this off your hands, 'have me excused: but be sure of this, it shall never excuse you, but accuse you. Therefore I desire that those persons, who have slighted this great salvation, by complimenting with Christ, that they would compliment no more with him at all, but now embrace it.

IV. The *Fourth* sort of persons, who slight this great salvation, are those who give way to discouragement and unbelief, so that they will not come and partake of this great salvation. I say, such of you are slighters of it; and Christ will esteem you such. Oh! if ye knew the worth and virtue of this great salvation, there would not be a temptation you could meet with, that would hinder you from embracing it; but if ye could not answer these temptations, ye would not own them. I say unto such under-valuers and slighters of the great salvation, as discouraged persons, and those who stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children, that when ye cannot answer your objections, which hinder you from closing with Christ, I intreat you disown them, as if ye had heard them not. Say ye, think ye this lawful? I say, it is both lawful and expedient; for it was the practice of believing Abraham, 'He considered not his own body,' being dry as an old stick, 'nor the deadness of Sarah's womb.' He did not consider these things which might have been objections to keep him from believing; he might have started at these two objections. Alas! I am old, and that objection could he not answer. And my wife is past child-bearing, neither could he answer that objection. What then did he with them? He slighted them both, and considered them not. *Secondly*, I would say this to you, who thus slight it because of discouragements, if ye did know the worth of this great salvation, which is in this gospel of redemption that is offered unto you, although ye had an army of objections to go through, ye would go through them all, to get a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem.

V. The *Fifth* sort of persons, who slight this great salvation, are those who will not do so much as take care, and give pains to hear this great salvation offered unto them; for there are some persons, who, if they come to the church, desire to sit farthest off, and so never take care to hear a word of this great salvation; and are such dreadful slighters of it, like unto those mentioned, Jer. vi. 10. 'To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear! behold their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken. Jer. vii. 24, But they would not hear. Jer vii. 10. Who say, we are delivered to do all these abominations; yet they did

come and stand before him, in the house which was called by his name.

VI. *Sixthly*, These persons are slighters of this great salvation, who, when they hear it, are not so much affected with it, than if we were reading unto them the most senseless history of Thomas the Rymer, or some other old fable; like unto those mentioned, Jer. vi. 10 'The word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.' I would pose you all, as in the sight of the Author of this great salvation, men or women, did you ever set yourselves (or took ye ever any pains) to bring up your hearts to the love of this great salvation,? Was it ever the rejoicing of your hearts, that Christ died and rose again? I do certainly believe it, and I am persuaded, that there are decrees past in heaven against many of you. 'That in hearing ye shall hear, but not understand; and in seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for God hath made your hearts harder than the flint or adamant; so that ye shall refuse to return when he doth exhort you. Believe me, if so I may speak, I think that there is as much probability that the stones of the wall would hear (if we would speak to them), as soon as many of you.

VII. *Seventhly*, These persons are slighters of the great salvation, who did never complain that they wanted a right to this great salvation. I hope some of you are now convinced that ye never came within the compass of this great salvation; I say not unto you, If ye did never spend an hour in secret weeping and lamenting, because ye had not a right to this gospel-redemption, it is but too probable you never yet had a right to it. Yea, know it, that such of you would little care to let precious Christ depart without any grief of heart; I think, if this were voiced within this house to-day, Whether or not shall Christ go and depart? I doubt, if there would be many heart-dissenters, though many tongue-dissenters. Oh! I fear there would be many hearts here saying, O Christ, depart and go thy way. Yea, there are many Gadarenes here, who prefer their kine and swine to precious Christ, and would beseech him to go out of their coasts.

VIII. *Eightly*, These persons slight the great salvation, who never took pains to engage their hearts to take hold of Christ and the gospel. Christ is near to you this day: the great salvation is near to you, and is now, even now offered unto you; therefore are there any who will take pains to lay hold on it? I obtest you all who are here, by the beauty and excellency of him, who is Author of this great salvation, that ye come and partake of it; I obtest you by all the joys of heaven, that ye embrace this great salvation. I obtest you by all the terrors in hell, that ye embrace it. I obtest you by the promises of the everlasting covenant, that ye embrace it. I obtest you by all the curses

that are written in this book of the covenant, that ye embrace it. I obtest you by the love that ye owe to your immortal souls, that you would once be wise, and come and partake of this great salvation. May I now have it, sayest thou? Yea, I say unto all, ye may have it to-day, ye may be partakers of it before ye go hence. And so, before I proceed any further, I do, in the name and authority of him who sent me here to-day, and is the Author of this great salvation, freely offer it unto you; therefore take it off my hand, embrace this great salvation offered to you to-day. But I know there will be eight sorts of humours within this house to-day, in relation to this great salvation which is now offered unto you.

1. I think there will be some of Gallio's disposition here to-day, that will care for none of these things; yea, there are many here who will not give a fig for the rich offer of the great salvation; but, I say, cursed be that person who puts on Gallio's temper to-day, that will care for none of these things.

2. I fear there will be many of Pilate's humour here to-day, who will say, they find nothing against the man; yet will cry out, 'take him and crucify him:' they find no fault with Christ, and yet will be content that he be crucified. Now, can we say any thing against Christ, who is the author of this great salvation: Produce your strong arguments. Are there any here who have any thing to say against him; I am here to answer in his name. I hope there is not one here who hath any thing to say against the Author of this great salvation; and why then do ye not take him? See unto yourselves, that there be none of Pilate's humour here to-day, that will cry out, ye find nothing in Christ why he should not be received, and yet will be content that he be crucified.

3. There will be many of the Jews here to-day, who cry out, 'away with Christ, away with Christ, and give me Barabbas.' But oh! what a hellish word is that, Away with spotless Christ, away with transcendent Christ, and give us the world? Now, are there any here who will be so gross slighters of this great salvation! Will ye slight this great salvation, and embrace your idols, which shall once prove a crown of thorns unto you?

4. There will be some of Felix's humour found here to-day, that will say, 'O Christ, go away at this time, and I will hear thee at a more convenient season.' But I say unto you, who will not hear me to-day, nc embrace this great salvation, I shall defy all the ministers in Scotland to assure you, that ye shall get another offer, if ye send me away to-day, there is not one that can or dare engage that the great salvation shall be in your offer any more; therefore, I say, let none of Felix's temper be

here to-day, that will say, 'They will hear Christ at a more convenient season'

5. There will be some of Balaam's temper to-day, who will desire 'to die the death of the righteous,' and to have their 'last end' like his;' yet they desire not to live the life of the righteous. But I say unto you, 'Ye shall never die the death of the righteous, if ye live not the life of the righteous.

6. There will be some of you here to-day, who, I hope, at least will be of Agrippa's humour, that will say, 'Thou hast almost persuaded me to be a Christian.' I say unto thee, O wilt thou quickly out with that word, 'almost,' and put in that word 'altogether,' and say, 'O precious Christ! thou hast altogether persuaded me to be a Christian.' However, if thou come no greater length, I intreat thee to come this length, that so thou may cry out, 'I am almost persuaded to embrace Christ the great salvation,' and it may be ere long ye will come further.

7. There will be some of Judas's temper here to-day, 'who will betray Christ for thirty pieces of silver:' Yea, some would sell Christ, heaven, their idols and all, for less than 'thirty pieces of silver.'

8. I think there will be many of Esau's profane temper here to-day, 'who will sell their birth-right for a mess of pottage.' Now, will ye enquire at yourselves, Am I the person that will give my birth-right for a mess of pottage? Doth my heart say, I will sell my birth-right, because I am hungered and ready to die? What will it profit me, give me a mess of pottage, and I will quit my birth-right? I know there are not a few such here to-day; therefore I intreat you, enquire at yourselves, What is your humour? O shall the great salvation, that ye have slighted so long, be slighted this day also, and shall there be none to embrace it? Oh! enquire and stand in awe, lest the wrath of the Most High pursue you.

Now, I shall give you these seven considerations, which may provoke you not to slight, but embrace this great salvation.

1. The *First* consideration, That the not embracing of this great salvation, is one of the greatest acts of folly that can be, Jer. viii. 9. 'They have rejected the word of the Lord;' (and immediately it is subjoined) 'and what wisdom is in them? And so Solomon doth assure you, they cannot be wise who neglect this great salvation, Prov. i. 7. 'Fools despise wisdom and instruction.' Therefore may I not say unto you, be who ye will (though ye were the greatest heads of wit in all this place), ye are but stark fools, as long as ye neglect this. But would ye be wise indeed, and wise unto eternal life? Then I intreat you, come and embrace this great salvation.

II. The *Second* consideration to provoke you not to slight the great salvation, is this, that the ruin and destruction of the slighters of it is the most certain and infallible, Jer. xi. 11. where, speaking of slighting the covenant, which is indeed the same great salvation, there is a *therefore* put in the threatening; 'Therefore thus saith the Lord, behold, I will bring evil upon them which they shall not be able to escape.' I defy you all, who are slighters of this great salvation, to find a back-door when justice shall pursue you. For there is no door to escape, if ye embrace not this great salvation; but the earth will disclose your iniquity, and the heaven will declare your sin.

III. *Thirdly*, Let this consideration provoke you not to slight this great salvation, that Christ is exceeding serious and earnest that ye would embrace it. And I think that Isa. xxviii 23. speaketh out this exceeding seriousness, where four times he beggeth of his hearers that they would give ear and hear his voice, saying, 'Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech.' What needeth all these exhortations, but that Christ is most serious that they would embrace the great salvation. And O that there was a person here to-day as serious to the bargain as Christ is! But, be who ye will that slight this great salvation, believe me, the day is coming wherein ye shall cry out, 'Alas! for the slighting of it.' Wilt thou therefore think presently with thyself, O thou slighter of this great salvation, what thou wilt say of thy slighting of it, when the devil shall be leading thee in through the dark gates of hell? O slighter of the gospel, how many alases wilt thou cry, when thou shalt be passing through these dark gates into thy everlasting prison? Wilt thou not then cry out, O me, slighter of the everlasting salvation! Whither am I now going? Alas! now for my slighting of the gospel. And as thou passest through, thou shalt meet with numbers of miserable comforters. There is not one in that prison that can comfort thee: but many dreadful alases shalt thou then both cry and hear, if thou embrace not this great salvation.

IV. *Fourthly*, Let this provoke you not to slight the great salvation, That ye will get it for a very look. O ye within this house to-day, ye will get this great salvation for one look, Isa. xlv. 22. 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' For a very look ye will get this great salvation; and do ye ever think to get to heaven at a lower rate?

V. The *Fifth* consideration to provoke you not to slight this great salvation any more, is this, there is not one of you who is a slighter of it, but your slighting of it shall increase your immortal bonds; man or woman, be who thou wilt, when thou art slighting this great salvation, thou art but plaiting a cord

wherewith to bind thy soul eternally in these unquenchable flames, Isa. xxviii. 22. 'Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.' I say therefore unto you, old men, mock not, lest your bands be made strong. Old women, near unto your graves, mock not, lest your bands be made strong. Young men be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong. Young women, who are in the flower of your time, mock not, lest your bands be made strong. But now, alas! will there, for all this, be a person here to-day who will be a mocker of this great salvation?

VI. The *Sixth* consideration to provoke you not to slight this great salvation any more, is this, Ye know not but that your days may be near a close. I say, ye know not but the day of the preaching of this great salvation may be near a close. What knowest thou, O man, or woman, but this shall be the last sermon that ever thou shalt hear concerning this great salvation? And yet, for all this, shall we be sent away without one consent to embrace or receive it? O! will ye be persuaded to look to Christ, and so to take him?

VII. The *Seventh* consideration to provoke you not to slight the great salvation, is this, that there is a fivefold salvation comprehended under this great salvation.

I. The *First* is this, come and partake of this great salvation, and thou shalt have salvation from thy idols: and hereby do I proclaim liberty this day unto captives. I am sent forth this day with the keys of your prison-house, to open your prison-doors unto you, if ye will embrace this great salvation. I say unto you, O ye prisoners! come forth and shew yourselves, for the keys of your prison-house are with us, to open your prison-doors unto you; therefore, O come forth and embrace this great salvation. Will there be any, shall I think, here that will refuse to come forth? O! go forth, and flee from the land of your captivity, and from the house of your bondage.

II. Thou shalt have salvation from thy darkness, and from thy ignorance. I say unto you, who understand no more of God than the stones of the wall, I command you to come forth, and partake yet of this great salvation; and unto you shall light arise, even the day spring from on high shall visit you.

III. If ye will come and partake of this great salvation, ye shall have deliverance from all your fears. Dost thou fear that thou shalt be poor? Come and partake of this great salvation, and thou shalt be delivered from it. Art thou afraid of hell? Come and partake of this great salvation, and thou shalt be delivered from that fear. Art thou afraid of the wrath of God? Then come, I say, and partake of this great salvation, and thou shalt have redemption from that, and all thy fears; 'With him is plen-

teous redemption, and he can make thee quiet from the fear of evil.'

IV. If thou wilt come and partake of this great salvation, thou shalt have deliverance from all thy anxieties, and from all thy care: ye are now careful and anxious about many things, come and partake of the great salvation, and it will make you careful but only for the 'one thing necessary.'

V. If ye will come and embrace this great salvation offered unto you this day, ye shall be helped before ye go hence, to sing that song, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?' Now, O will ye come and embrace this great salvation? And ye will be more than conquerors through Christ, who loveth you. Are there, therefore, any here to-day that would have victory over the devil, and over their own hearts? Then come and embrace this great salvation, and then your victory is certain.

But now to press home this great salvation upon you a little further, there are nine sorts of persons who are invited to come and partake of this great salvation offered this day; and I charge you, answer to your names, when ye are called, and delay not to come.

I. *First*, I invite and call here to-day, all who are willing to come and embrace this great salvation. Now, are there any of you here to-day who are called *willing*? then I invite you to come and embrace this great salvation, Rev. xxii. 17. 'Whatsoever will, let him come.' But, oh! are there none here to-day, who are named *willing*? I entreat you, if there be any, do not deny your name, but come when ye are called, and embrace this great salvation.

II. *Secondly*, Those persons who thirst for it are invited to come and partake of this great salvation, Rev. xxii. 17. 'Let him that is athirst, come.' Now, if there be any here who are named *thirsty*, let them come and partake of this great salvation, and they shall be satisfied.

III. *Thirdly*, Are there any moneyless folk here to-day? Let them come and partake of this great salvation. Are there no moneyless folk here to-day? I mean not that money or coin in your purses, but want ye money? that is, want ye righteousness? then I pray you come and partake of this great salvation. I say, Are ye so poor, that ye have nothing but the fear of hell? Then I pray you come. If there be any here who have nothing to commend them to Christ but necessity; I say unto all such, O come, come, come, and partake of this great salvation.

IV. *Fourthly*, Those persons are invited to come (and I wish there were many such here), who are *weary*: but, oh! are there none here to-day who are called *weary*? Are ye not weary in

pursuit of your sins? If there be any such here to-day, I say unto you, O weary folk, come, come, come, and partake of this great salvation, and of this excellent gospel redemption that was purchased at so dear a rate.

V. *Fifthly*, Those who are heavy laden, are invited to come (and I think all of you may answer to this name), 'are ye heavy laden?' O then come. But are there none here who are heavy laden with sin, with misery, and estrangement from God? If there be any such here, I say unto thee, old man, or young man, be who thou wilt, O come and partake of this great salvation.

VI. *Sixthly*, Are there any here to-day who are called blind? I say, if there be any of you who think ye want eyes to see the precious excellencies of Christ, I invite you to come and partake of this great salvation.

VII. *Seventhly*, Are there any who are called lame here to-day? I say unto such, O come, come, come, and partake of this great salvation: for we are sent forth to-day to call in the blind, and the maimed, and the lame, that they may come and embrace this great salvation: therefore are there none here to-day who may be called such? Are ye neither blind or lame? I hope many of you will not deny that ye are such; therefore I say unto you, O blind, halt and maimed, come, come, and partake of this great salvation.

VIII. The *Eighth* sort of persons invited, are those who are sick; therefore if there be any sick folk here to-day, be who ye will, I say unto you, O come and partake of this great salvation; 'for the whole need not a physician, but the sick.'

IX. *Ninthly*, Are there any here to-day who know not their name, or their condition? I say unto you, O nameless folk, come and partake of this great salvation, come to Christ for the knowledge of your soul's condition, come as a nameless one, and he shall not reject thee, though thy case were so evil that thou could not give it a name; for of all that come unto him, he sendeth none away.

Now, where do you find your name and surname? O do ye not know it? I hope you may know it; therefore I entreat you to answer to it, and so come away, and partake of this great salvation.

But I am afraid there be many strong iron-bars in the way of some of you which ye cannot win over. Ah! how fast are some souls locked in Satan's snare? And therefore I shall speak a little for discovering of those bars, that hinder from embracing this great salvation, that so ye may be the better helped to remove them.

1. The *First* great iron-bar which keepeth folk from embrac-

ing this great salvation, is the bar of ignorance; and I am afraid that this, as a mighty bar, hindereth many of you; ye are ignorant of yourselves, and of the condition of your souls; ye are ignorant of the law, and of its severity; and ye are ignorant of the precious gospel in its condescendency. O pray unto God, that for Christ's sake he would break that great bar of ignorance: for till that be done, Christ may take up that complaint, Jer. v. 4. 'Surely they are foolish; they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.' I say, this bar of ignorance keepeth you from embracing this great salvation.

II. The *Second* bar which keepeth many from closing with Christ, is the bar of presumption; for some will cry out, What need have I to embrace the great salvation? Have I it not already? But I say unto thee, O fool, thou art (by all appearance) yet in bondage. O that this evil bar of presumption were put away; for it is one of the greatest impediments which lieth in the way of your embracing this great salvation that is in your offer today; therefore I say unto you, if ye will come no further, I entreat you come this length, to confess that ye want this gospel-salvation, and that ye are indeed strangers to this redemption purchased by Christ.

III. The *Third* bar that keepeth persons from embracing this great salvation, is the bar of unbelief; ye believe not what we say to you anent this great salvation. I know that some of you are of the Stoicks and Epicures humour, who cry out, 'What meaneth this man? He seemeth to be a setter forth of some strange god.' But I say unto you, I am not the setter forth of any strange god, but it is Jesus of Nazareth whom I preach unto you. Alas! some of you thinketh this great salvation to be some morning dream, or some golden fancy: but I say unto you, it is neither a dream nor fancy, but a real truth that we preach unto you.

IV. The *Fourth* bar that keepeth persons from embracing this great salvation, is the bar of discouragement. This strong bar keepeth many so fast, that they cannot embrace this great salvation, though it be freely offered unto them. I shall say no more to you, who are these, but counsel you to do as those four lepers did, 2 Kings vii. 3. 4. who sat at the gate of Samaria, who said, 'Why sit we here until we die? If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall into the host of the Syrians; if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.' Even so I say unto you, that if ye abide in the state of unbelief, ye shall surely be undone; therefore go forth, for ye know not but God may work a great salvation for you; and if ye will not quit your un-

belief, and close with Christ in the offer of this great salvation, by faith, ye shall have no more to do, 'but eat and drink and divide the spoil.'

V. The *Fifth* bar which withholdeth persons from embracing this great salvation, is the bar of unwillingness; 'Ye will not come to me that ye may have life.' Ah! alas! that is an iron bar indeed by which all that are in hell have barred themselves out of heaven. Alas! shall ye be such wretches also? O what a dreadful sound is that? 'Wo unto thee, O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?' Ah! 'turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? Why will ye slight this great salvation?' O will none of you this day embrace it?

VI. The *Sixth* bar that withholdeth persons from embracing this great salvation, is the bar of worldly-mindedness. Many of you are so fixed to the world, that ye cannot come and close with this great salvation. I may allude to that word spoken of Saul, 1 Sam. x. 21. that he hid himself among the stuff; for many have buried, and nested themselves in the midst of the world, that they cannot embrace this great salvation.

VII. The *Seventh* bar which keepeth many from embracing this great salvation, is the bar of hard-heartedness. There hath such a stupidity and hardness of heart seized upon many, that let Christ preach as he will to them, by his word, or by other dispensations, they are no more moved than if his word or dispensations were a thousand miles from them. O that strong bar of hardness of heart, when shall the omnipotent hand of God break it?

VIII. The *Eighth* bar that hindereth many from embracing this great salvation, is the bar of slothfulness. Many of you cannot be at the pains to embrace it; but I say unto you, there is but small pains in the way of godliness. I say unto you, it may so easily be had, that is in your offer to-day, and if ye will ye may put forth your hand, and take it. Consider therefore what ye will do. O! will ye despise it? I say will ye still neglect and despise it? Will ye but read that dreadful word, Acts xiii. 41. 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.' Tell me freely, would ye have us to return this answer to him who sent us, that ye are despisers of this great salvation? Say to it, are there none of you, who (for all this) will consent to partake of this great salvation? O captives and prisoners, and ye who are in the bonds of Satan, will ye come and partake of this great salvation, and you shall be made free? I have an act of release for you to-day, if ye will come and make use of it, ye shall be set at liberty. But Oh! shall the prison-doors be cast open, and yet none come forth? But (that I may come to a close) I say unto you, O poor pri-

soner, go forth, go forth, and partake of this great salvation. O! will ye not come forth? What holdeth you in? The foundation of your prison-house is shaken to-day; therefore if ye will but come forth, and cast a look to Christ, your very shackles shall fall off your hands, and ye shall be as those who were never bound. Now I leave this with you, and to make you think upon it, I shall speak these five words unto you, and I entreat you think upon them.

1 *First*, I have excellent tidings to tell you, (I hope some of you will give ear to them) viz. there is a great person come here to-day, and that is, the mighty Author of this great salvation, who hath brought everlasting righteousness with him, desiring you to make use thereof: it is his desire that ye would take his excellent gift at his hand. These, I say, are the tidings that I have to preach unto you; and I hope never to be declared a liar: for what I preach unto you, I say yet unto you, that Christ, the author of this great salvation, desireth to give it freely unto you, if ye will but take it. But, O! will ye not take it? I think, if ye did see an hundred men lying in prison, or dungeon, without light, bread, or water, and a great prince coming to them saying, I desire to see you all come forth and partake of this great liberty which I bring unto you; and every one of them should answer, I scorn to come forth at this time; would ye not think them exceeding great fools And yet I fear this act of great folly falls out in many of your hands to-day; that when Christ hath given you the keys of your prison-doors, and they are opened, ye will not come forth. But I must entreat you yet to come forth, and shew yourselves; for who knoweth, but we may be commanded to shut your prison-doors again, and to seal them with seven seals, with an unalterable decree from heaven, never to be recalled? Wherefore, O ye prisoners, go forth, go forth from your prison-house.

2. *Secondly*, I would say this to you, that it is not without much ground that this great salvation (offered to you) is called a great salvation: I know a little paper of two or three sheets might contain all the salvation that ever any man obtained; but the world would never be able to contain all the books which might be written to the commendation of this great salvation; yea, unto any who will embrace it, I say, *First*, If thou find not this great salvation above thy faith, then go thy way when thou art come: but I know thou wilt find it both above thy faith and hope. *Secondly*, If you find it not above thy desires, when thou art come unto it, then go away again; but were thy desires as the sand upon the sea-shore, thou shalt always find more in thy salvation, than ever thou could desire. *Thirdly*, If

this salvation be not above what thou can conceive, then go thy way, when thou art come to it; but think of it as thou can, it shall always be above thy thoughts of it. *Fourthly*, If this salvation be not above thy opinion of it, then go thy way, when thou art come unto it: but I know thou wilt find it far above thy opinion of it. Therefore seeing it is so great a salvation, as that all the world could not contain all the books which might be written in the commendation of it, O will ye embrace it, even to-day, while it is in your offer.

3. *Thirdly*, I would say this unto you, be persuaded, that there is no sin that will more provoke the majesty of God to punish you, than the sin of slighting the great salvation, 'Bring forth these murderers,' saith the Lord (of the slighters of this invitation) 'and slay them before me.' I entreat you enquire at your own hearts, What will ye answer when ye are reproved for slighting of it? Old men, will ye ask at your own hearts what will ye answer to Christ, when he shall propose that question to you, 'Why slighted ye the great salvation?' Old women, what will ye answer, when he shall say to you, 'Why slighted ye the great salvation?' Young men, and young women, enquire at your own hearts, what will ye answer, when Christ shall say to you, 'Why slighted ye the great salvation?' Can ye imagine any answer unto that question? O dreadful shall the wrath of God be, that shall be executed upon the slighters of this great salvation!

4. *Fourthly*, I would say this unto you, that heaven is waiting to hear, what acceptation the offer of this great salvation doth get among you; here is the great salvation, here is the offer of it, and here is the commendation of it: what say you to it? Is it not an excellent salvation? Is it not a free salvation? Is it not a great salvation? Is it not an eternal salvation? Why then do ye not welcome it? Can any of you say any thing to the discommendation of it? I know you cannot. Yea, I dare say, your own hearts are admiring it as most excellent; and therefore O! will ye accept it? Alas! shall there be none here, who will be found accepters of this great salvation, so freely offered to-day?

5. *Fifthly*, I would say this to you, let all the angels praise him, who is the Author of this great salvation. All the saints round about the throne, praise him who is the Author of this great salvation. All those who are the expectants of heaven, praise him who is the Author of this great salvation. All ye to whom this offer is made, praise him who is the Author of this great salvation. O heaven, praise him who is the Author of this great salvation. O all ye fowls of the air, praise him who is the

Author of this great salvation. O fire! hail, snow, vapours stormy winds and tempests, praise him who is the Author of this great salvation. All the tribes of the earth, praise him, who is the Author of this great salvation. Our own souls praise him, who is the Author of this great salvation. And all that is within us bless him, who is the Author of this great salvation. O! who would not praise him, who is the Author of this great salvation? Are there any here that will refuse to commend him? O! think upon him, and let not this be a day of slighting him. Now where are your hearts at this time? I will tell you where many of your hearts are, they are thinking upon the world But I am sure, there are not many of them thinking upon this great salvation. Now, what resolution mind ye to go away with to-day? Oh! have ye no resolution beyond what ye had when ye came hither to-day? Are there any here who have this resolution, to whom shall we go, but to him who is the Author of this great salvation, who alone hath the words of eternal life. Even the Lord breathe it upon you. Or, is this your resolution, that through Christ's strength (forsake him who will) ye will never forsake him? Or, have ye this resolution, that ye will esteem the great salvation more highly than ever ye did? O that the Lord may keep these in the imaginations of the thoughts of your hearts for ever. But as for you who have no resolutions to embrace this great salvation, oh! wherewith shall I commend it unto you? Do not your own necessities commend it? But if nothing can persuade you to come away and embrace it, then this place shall be a heap of witnesses against you: 'For it hath heard all the works of the law which he hath spoken unto you,' Joshua xxiv. 27.

Oh! cast your eyes upon these pillars of the house, and stones of the walls, I take them as so many witnesses, that they may speak and testify against you in the great day of the Lord, if ye neglect this great salvation to-day; therefore ere ye go away, be thinking upon it, whether or not ye mind to embrace it, now while ye may have it. This day I have set life and death before you, I have set before you both the great salvation, and the great damnation; and O that ye had understanding in these things, that ye, being wise, might be provoked at last to embrace this great salvation, the which we do yet again entreat you to think upon. Is not heaven looking upon you at this time, to see what ye will do with this great offer of salvation, which I have this day, from the Lord, presented unto you? Now, to him that can persuade you to embrace this great salvation, this gospel redemption, this blessed mystery, into which the angels desire to pry, to him, who can bring you back from the pit, and enlighten you

with the light of the living, to him, who hath the key of your prison, who can open and none can shut, and can shut and none can open: to him, who hath all power in heaven and earth communicate to him, who can deliver you from the grave, and can set you free from all your enemies, we desire to give praise. Amen.

SERMON II.

Heb. ii. 3. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.*

THERE are two great and most ordinary complaints in these days; 1. There are many who complain that their estates and persons are in boundage, and that they are sold for slaves to the hand of strangers. But, O that we could also turn over the complaint to this, 'That our souls are in bondage, and that we are yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity'; that so we might be provoked to long for the great salvation that is in your offer. 2. There are many complaining (and not without much cause) that there is now such a toleration of errors. But wilt thou complain also of this, that within thy heart there is a toleration of lusts? Is there not an act of toleration concluded within thy breast, that the devil and his company may reign in thee at pleasure? Oh! have ye not need of this great salvation? Shall I tell you that Christ is courting you to embrace it, that he putteth on all his most glorious robes, and manifesteth himself unto you as a suiter, making offer of himself, and of his great salvation? O tell me, have ye seen him? Or do ye think to see him this day? What robes had he on? There are five glorious robes wherewith he clothes himself, when he condescendeth to manifest himself to his people. *First*, He cometh to his own with the garments of salvation; according to that word, Zech. ix. 9. 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation.' Nay, your king is come here to-day, and will ye not fall in love with him, when he is clothed with the garments of salvation? Can ye ever have a more conquering sight of Christ, than when he is clothed with such an excellent robe, and offering you salvation? *Secondly*, He appeareth to his own sometimes in a garment dyed in blood; according to that word, Isa lxiii. 1. Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments in blood, as one that treadeth the wine fat?' And now I say to

thee who will not look to Christ when he appears in the garments of salvation, have ye a heart to refuse him that hath fought such a combat for you, who hath 'trode the wine-press alone,' and hath stained all his garments with the blood of his enemies? Or is there any here, who dare refuse this salvation, when they see how he treadeth his enemies in anger, and trampleth them in his fury, and thus sprinkleth their blood upon his garments? O tremble at this sight, and seek quarters from him in time, or he shall dye his garments with the blood of thy immortal soul. *Thirdly*, Christ appeareth unto his own, being clothed with those humble robes of condescendency, when he came in the similitude of sinful flesh. O! what a sight was that, to behold the Prince of heaven clothed with our nature? What a sight was that, to behold him, who 'was clothed with light as with a garment,' to be clothed with our infirmities? Yet he condescended to clothe himself thus, that we might have access unto him, and be partakers of his gift: O! can we refuse him, when we have thus pressed him to put on beggars-weeds, that he might say to worms, 'ye are my brethren and my sisters.' *Fourthly*, Christ sometimes manifesteth himself, being clothed with the garments of beauty and ravishing majesty. Such was the sight that the spouse got of Christ, Cant. ii. 3. 'As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons;' and Cant. v. when she saw him 'white and ruddy, and the standard-bearer of ten thousand,' such was that joyful sight of him when his garments were as the light, 'and white as the snow;' which he had at the transfiguration, when those glorified ones did come, as it were, ambassadors from the higher house to make him a visit. And, *Fifthly*, Christ sometimes appeareth to his own in robes of dreadful majesty, and terrible highness and loftiness, when that soul, upon the first sight of him, remains dead, and there remains no more life in them. Such was the sight that Daniel got in his xth. chap. and such was the sight that John got of Christ, Rev. i. 13—18. And I would ask at all that are here, what a sight have ye gotten of Christ to-day, in which of all these robes have ye seen him in? It is true, we are not now to look for the extraordinary sights of him; but yet, if ever thou hast seen him in any of his wooing robes, sure he hath appeared matchless; and how shall ye then refuse him?

But now to come to the words I was speaking unto you of; the *first* thing in the words, *viz.* that there are many who live under the offer of this great salvation that do slight it, and do not embrace it: and now I shall only add a few things further unto you. 1. Let me propose a few considerations, to persuade you to embrace this great salvation: God forbid we go away

before we embrace this gospel salvation. And therefore I charge you, in his name, go not away before ye embrace it. And to press it home upon you, there are these eight or nine properties of this great salvation that is offered unto you this day.

And *First*, It is a free salvation; ye have no more ado but to put forth your hand and take it. O come and take it. Christ hath fought for this salvation, and there is no more required of you, but to come, and reap the fruits of his victory; 'whosoever will, let him come;' there is nothing that should move you to stay away, O captives, and bond slaves to Satan. O prisoners of hope; will ye come and partake of this great salvation? What holds you from coming away and partaking of it? It is freely offered unto you, ay, believe it, Christ requires no more of you, but that ye should come and take it out of his hand: if ye consent to obey, the bargain is ended: 'Ye shall eat the good of the land.' Isa. i. 19.

Secondly, This great salvation, is a complete salvation that is offered unto you to-day; this is clear, Luke i. 17. 'That we might be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us.' There is not an enemy that is in thy way, but if thou wilt come and partake of the great salvation, thou may have victory over it; so complete a salvation is it that is in your offer this day. O, shall we pass away, and not embrace it? O, shall your cursed hearts undervalue this complete salvation that is come to your door? Believe it, 'salvation is near unto you,' if ye will take it.

Thirdly, It is a wonderful salvation; it is such a salvation as the angels desire to pry into and it is such a salvation that all the prophets desire to pry into; it is almost six thousand years since all the angels in heaven fell into a sea of wonder at this great salvation; it is almost six thousand years since Abel fell into a sea of wonder at this great salvation; and what think ye is his exercise this day? He is even wondering at this great salvation. Would ye ask at all the angels in heaven; would they not all say, O embrace the great salvation? Would ye ask at all the saints that are above, would they not advise you to embrace this great salvation? Would ye ask at Adam, would he not say, O embrace this great salvation? Would ye ask at Abel, would he not say, O embrace this great salvation? And would not all the patriarchs say unto you, O embrace this great salvation? And do not all who have tasted of the sweetness of it, cry our unto you, come and embrace the great salvation.

The *Fourth* property of this salvation is, that it was bought at an exceeding dear rate; it is a dear salvation. Would ye know the difference betwixt Christ's coming to this salvation, and your

coming to it? It is this. Christ was forced to travel through all the armies of the justice of God; he was forced to drink of the cup of the wrath of God, before he could come to purchase this great salvation; and now what is required of you to obtain this? We may say no more, but put out our hands, and take it. Will ye look to the price that was laid down for this salvation? There is not a wound in the body of Christ, but it saith, this is a dear salvation. There is not a reproach Christ met with, but it saith, O is not this a dear salvation? There is not a buffeting Christ met with, but it saith, O is not this a dear salvation? There is not a necessity that he is put into, but it saith, is not this a great and dear salvation? O sirs! will ye not come and take this great salvation, this dear salvation? What must I give for it, say ye? I say ye must give nothing for it, come and take it, 'without money, and without price:' it was dear to Christ, but it shall be cheap unto you. O! is it not cheap to you? I assure you, if you will come to the market to buy the great salvation, there is none of you who needeth to stand for the price of it. O come and take it, and have it, and there will be no more prigging.

Fifthly, It is an everlasting salvation, that ye shall enjoy the fruits of throughout eternity; as is clear, Heb. v. 9. 'He became the author of eternal redemption unto us.' It is a salvation that the devil can never be able to take out of your hands: if ye take it, ye shall never be robbed of it again. O come and partake of this great salvation, whereby the gates of hell shall never prevail against you.

Sixthly, It is a noble and honourable salvation; it is not to be taken out of one slavery to another, but it is to be taken 'out of prison that we may reign,' Luke i. 71. compared with ver. 74. It is, 'That we being saved, may serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.' I say, come, come and partake of this great salvation, that your glory may be increased, and that ye may be exalted above the kings of the earth.

Seventhly, It is a most advantageous salvation: what are the advantages of any salvation that are not to be found in this? Is there not peace to be found through this salvation? Is there not liberty to be found through this salvation? Is there not eternal enjoyment of God to be found through this salvation! Yea, all salvations are in this one salvation.

Lastly, It is a royal salvation; for it cometh to us from, and through the Son of God: Christ is the Author of it. And we conceive, Christ may be said to be the Author of this salvation, in these respects; 1. He is the meritorious cause that did pro-

cure it; it was the price of his blood that was laid down for it, to purchase this great salvation. 2. He is the fountain from whence it floweth; according to that which we have cited, Heb. v. 9. 'He became the Author of eternal salvation.' 3. He is the person that fitteth our spirits for partaking of it; and it is he that removeth mountains out of the way, that we may have fair access unto the great salvation. 4. It is he that must persuade our hearts to embrace and take hold of it. He standeth without and crieth unto the heart to embrace this great salvation, and he standeth within, making the heart cry out, Content, I will embrace the great salvation; he is indeed the person that commendeth, and doth point forth this great salvation unto us. He is the noble minister of it, it began first to be preached by him.

Now, is there any of you that hath fallen in love with this great salvation? That ye may try yourselves, I shall give you some evidences of the persons that are near unto this great salvation. 1. Is thy estimation of the great salvation increased by what it was in the morning when thou come hither? Is thy estimation of the great gospel salvation a foot higher than it was in the morning? I say unto thee, thou art not far from the great salvation, come away. 2. Is thy desire after the great salvation increased by what it was in the morning? Hast thou stronger desires after the great salvation, than before thou camest hither? That is an evidence thou art not far from it. 3. Is thy thoughts of thy necessity of the great salvation greater than they were? Thinkest thou that thou hast more need of the great salvation than ever thou thoughtest before?' And is thy opinion and thoughts of saving thyself, less than they were before thou camest hither? Art thou forced to cry out, 'None but Christ can save me!' I say, thou art not far from the great salvation; wilt thou come away? O that ye would once seal this conclusion with much heart persuasion, I am undone without Christ, I am undone without Christ, who is the Author of this great salvation. Are there any of you that are sensible that ye are in the fetters of sin, 'and in the bonds of iniquity?' Are ye brought to the conviction of this, 'that ye are in the gall of bitterness?' I say, if thou be brought to this length, to be sensible of thy bonds, and are crying out, O Redeemer, hasten, and come away. I say, if thou be sensible of thy bonds and imprisonment, and crying out, O thou that was anointed from eternity to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, O hasten and come away, and redeem me, even poor me, sinking, sinning, perishing, self-destroying me, thou art not far from the great salvation. 4. Art thou a person who beginneth to weep, because thou hast been so long a stranger to Christ, and the great salva-

tion? Old men that are here, how long have ye been strangers to the great salvation, and to the Author of it? Now will ye shed one tear for your estrangements, and cry out, wo is me that Christ and I have been so long asunder? I say, if thou hast come that length, thou art not far from the great salvation, come away: O pity yourselves, make haste, make haste, and come away.

But now, in the *Third* place, Let me give you some evidences by which you may know more clearly, whether or not ye have embraced this great salvation; that ye may know yourselves, and that ye walk not down to your graves with a lie in your right hand. The *first* evidence of a person that hath embraced this great salvation, is, that they will have a high esteem of the Saviour and Author of the great salvation. Hast thou a matchless esteem of matchless Christ, the Saviour of the world? That is a speaking evidence unto thee that thou art a partaker of the great salvation: art thou came this length, that thou criest out, None but Christ, none but Christ? It is a speaking evidence that thou art come to be partaker of the great salvation, when thou can cry out that word, Exod. xv. 2. 'The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation.' If Christ hath become thy salvation, then it is like he hath become thy song. I would ask this at you, were ye ever brought this length, that ye durst never advance to praise Christ alone, but was forced to call all the creatures, and say, O magnify the Lord with me? O that is an evidence that ye have embraced this great salvation.

Secondly, Those who have embraced the great salvation, will study to maintain and keep their grips of it; they will study to hold fast so precious a jewel. This is prest, Gal. v. 1. 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.' Yea, they will study to walk suitable to this noble mercy, at least they will strive and endeavour to do it; as is also pressed in that same verse. I say, if thou hast been made a partaker of the gospel-salvation, thou wilt strive to keep thyself from the power of those things that once triumphed over thee.

Thirdly, A person who is a partaker of the great salvation, will have a high esteem of this mercy and salvation; so Paul, when he speaketh of it here, he cannot but put some note of excellency to it, calling it the *great salvation*: therefore I say, if thou hast embraced the great salvation, thou wilt have an high esteem of it, that not to be subjected to it as thou should, or to be in subjection to the power of thy lust in any measure, will be thy burden and affliction. The man will be sorry when he is brought forth from the house of bondage unto the Red-sea; he will be sorry, that when he should have songs of triumph over his idols

put in his mouth, that they should sing songs of triumph over him.

Fourthly, A person who hath embraced the great salvation, will be longing sometimes for the day when his salvation shall be complete, when he shall sing that song, with that 'numerous multitude, which cannot be numbered,' Rev. vii. 9. O what a day shall it be, when thou shalt begin to sing that song? 'After this (saith he) I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands:' and they cried: and how cried they? 'They cried with a loud voice.' They would not mutter the song nor sing silently, but 'cried with a loud voice:' and what did they cry? 'They cried with a loud voice, saying, salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.' I would only ask you who are partakers of the great salvation, what songs shall be put into thy mouth, when 'the waters of Jordan shall divide themselves, that the ransomed of the Lord may pass through?' When thou shalt sing that song, Psalm cxv. 1. 'Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thee belongs the glory of our salvation!' O what a day shall it be, when that excellent song shall be put into thy mouth? Yea, what a day shall it be, when thou shalt be clothed with these excellent garments that are made mention of, Isa. vi. 10. For he hath clothed thee with the 'garments of salvation,' and he hath covered thee with the 'robes of righteousness.' O what robes are these? Did ye ever see such excellent robes as these must be? I think we will misken ourselves. O! do ye not think we will misken ourselves when we shall put on these excellent robes? Now therefore is the bargain closed? Or will ye go away before ye take this great salvation? Dare ye go out at these doors, and neglect the great salvation? I would ask this at you, think ye it will not be most sad, that Christ should tell this in heaven of you to-night, I was preaching to a pack of stones, that not of them would love me? Will ye not be afraid that this report shall be carried back to heaven of you? For what report can Christ carry back but this? Now is the cord of this great salvation let down unto you, is there none of you that will take a grip of it? O will ye flighter after it? Will ye make this a rejoicing day in heaven, that is a fasting day unto you? And the way to make it so, is to embrace the great salvation. Now what say ye to it, old men? Let me speak to you, and ask your thoughts of the great salvation; gray hairs should be a crown of glory, if they be found in the way of righteousness. Old men, speak your minds, that young men may not have your bad example, what say ye of this great sal-

vation? Is it not a most glorious salvation? Is it not a most excellent salvation that is in your offer? I intreat you speak your minds, tell Christ that ye are content to take the great salvation: otherwise, whoever he be that will not partake of this gospel-salvation, I, in the name and authority of Christ our Maker, denounce eternal and irrevocable war against him; put on your harness, ye shall not boast when ye put it off again: the wrath and fury of God shall come upon thee to the uttermost, if ye embrace not this great salvation. Other wars are but for a time, the greatest captains that ever the earth did carry, are now laid down in the sides of the pit, and their swords broken under their heads. Armies of ten hundred thousand, a hundred years time have laid them all in their graves, and ended all their contests; but there is no discharge of this war, that shall be concluded betwixt Christ and you, it shall become an eternal and most terrible war, which shall be but beginning when time is ended: now peace, or war, which of them will ye choose? Dare ye send a charge to Christ, and say that ye will defy him? I am afraid there shall be two things that many of us shall report to-day: *First*, I am afraid there will be many that will give Pharoah's report to the offer of the great salvation, and say, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?' I tell you who he is, he is 'glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.' O embrace him before he go hence, and give not Pharaoh's report, lest ye be drowned in the sea of his wrath, whence there shall be no recovery. *Secondly*, I fear there will be many here to-day, that will give Demas's report to this precious offer; I will go and forsake Christ, and embrace this present world. O bad exchange; cursed be he that will make it; will ye be of Demas's humour? I fear there hath been many of that humour of a long time; but I intreat you once to be wise before you die. I confess that proverb, *Old fools are twice fools.* I think old men that will not embrace the great salvation, I think they are triple fools; what wait you for, is there any thing that can afford you any satisfaction but this great salvation? Now, are ye convinced, old men, that Christ is waiting for your answer; I intreat you, before ye go hence, speak your minds, what think ye of the great salvation? Is it not a lovely salvation? Is it not lovely now? What say ye to it? I am to go away, and the offer is to be taken up at this time, and it is hard to say, if ever ye shall have an offer again. I would only say this to you, and be sure of it, though I should never be a partaker of this great salvation, yet I shall be a witness against you that are not partakers of it. I tell and declare unto you, I shall be a witness against you, if ye embrace not this great salvation. Now, old men, are ye per-

suaded to embrace it? Let me obtest you by the beauty of Christ, come and partake of the great salvation, ye that are travelling upon the borders of eternity. Now, if ye will give no more, give this, will ye go home and think upon it. I shall not be uncharitable, nor enter to judge your thoughts. I fear there will be many declared and found guilty among us, that we have declared unto heaven, we will not embrace this great salvation, but have trode the blood of the 'Son of God under foot.' Now I intreat every one of you, ask at yourselves, if ye be the persons that will presume in your hearts to do so; now I shall leave it with you, let it not be a witness against you. I shall leave it with this, O come away, old men, young men, old women and maids, come and embrace this precious gospel-salvation. Ye may say, ye bid us come, but we cannot come. I desire no more of you but to come with this, Lord, I am content to come, but I cannot come. Come once to that, for if once ye be content to receive it, it will not be long before ye be able to receive it. Now shall Christ depart, and will none of you say, ye are content to take him? Will ye charge your own consciences with this, am I content to take Christ, and the great salvation? O blest, blest, blest be he that is the Author of this great salvation; and blest be he that gets any of the ends of the cords of the great salvation, that he sink not under the wrath and fury of the Lord. Come and embrace this great salvation. And again, I say, come and embrace it; for what can ye have if ye want it? And what can ye want if ye have it. I shall say no more, but close with that word, Isa. lxii. 11. 'Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, to those that are afar off:' what hath he proclaimed, 'Say ye to the daughter of Zion, behold thy salvation cometh, behold it cometh.' I say unto you that are the ends of the world, 'salvation is brought near unto you.' Stout-hearted and far from righteousness, the great salvation is brought near unto you, and will ye send it away! O consider what ye are doing. And to him that can persuade you to embrace this great salvation, we desire to give praise.

A SERMON

CONCERNING DEATH.

Psalm lxxxix. 48. *What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death,* &c.

IT is very hard to determine, where all that are here shall be within thirty years; for even ere that time come, many, if

not all of us who are here, shall have taken up our everlasting lodging. And whether we shall take it up in the eternity of joy, or in the eternity of pain, is also hard to determine; only this one thing I am sure of, that all of us shall shortly be gone, and ere long the shadows of death shall be sitting upon our eyelids, and our eye-strings shall begin to break. Therefore I would the more seriously inquire at you, what would you think if death were approaching this night unto you? Think ye that Jesus Christ is gone up to prepare a place for you, even for you. Surely I think we are all near to eternity, and there are some hearing me to-day, whom I defy the world to assure that ever they shall hear another sermon: therefore I intreat you all to hear this preaching, as if it were the last preaching that ever ye should hear; and O that we would speak it, as if it were the last sermon that ever we would preach unto you. Believe me, death is another thing than we take it to be. Oh! what will many of us do in the day of our visitation, when desolation shall come from afar? where will we flee for rest? and where will we leave our glory? Old rich men, where will ye flee when death assaults you? Old poor men, where will ye flee when death assaults you? Old women, where will ye flee when death assaults you? Young women, where will ye flee when death assaults you? It was an ancient observation of David, Psalm xxxix. 5 that 'God had made his days as an hand-breadth.' This either may relate to the fourfold state of man, viz. his infancy, his childhood, his manhood, and his old age; or it may relate to the fourfold time of his life, viz. his morning, his forenoon, his afternoon, and his evening; yet all our life-time is but a day. And O think ye not that our day is near unto a close.

Now before that I begin to speak any thing from the words, I shall speak a few things to these two questions, which I conceive may not altogether be unprofitable.

Quest. 1. Whether is it lawful for any to desire to die, and return unto their long and endless home? Whether it be lawful for one to cry out, O time, time flee away, and all my shadows let them be gone, that so long eternity may come?

Ans. I say, It is lawful in some cases for one to desire to die; for it was Paul's desire, Philip. i. 23. 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.' And 2 Cor. v. 2. 'We groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.' I long greatly till the twenty-first year of my age come, when my minority shall be overpast, that I may be entered heir to that matchless inheritance. But to clear in what cases it is lawful to desire to die;

1. I say, it is lawful to desire to die, when it floweth from a desire of uninterrupted fellowship and communion with Christ, and conjunction with him; this is clear, 2 Cor. v. 6. 'Knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.' Therefore, verse 8. 'We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' Also it is clear Philip. i. 23 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.' It was his great end to have near and unmixed communion with Christ. What aileth you, Paul (might one have said), may ye not be content to stay a while here? Nay, saith Paul, 'I desire to be gone, and to be with Christ.' Wast thou never with him here, Paul? I have been with him, saith he; but what is all my being with him here, in comparison of my being with him above; 'Whilst I am present in the body, I am absent from the Lord:' therefore I will never be at rest, saith he, get what I will, until I get Christ, until I get those naked and immediate embracements of that noble plant of renown, the flower of the stock of Jesse, who is the light of the higher house, the eternal admiration of angels.

2. It is lawful to desire to die, when it floweth from the excellencies of heaven, from a desire to partake of those excellent things that are there; this is clear, 2 Cor. v. 4. 'We groan, being burdened;' or, as the word is, 'We groan, as they who are pressed under a heavy burden, that we may be clothed upon,' &c. What aileth you to groan so, Paul? O! saith he, I groan that mortality may be swallowed up of life.

3. It is lawful to desire to die, when it floweth from a desire to be saved from the body of death, and from those temptations that assault us, and from those oppressions whereunto we are subject by it. Doubtless Paul desired to die on this account, when he cried out, Rom. xii. 24. 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' he longeth greatly for that day, 'wherein he shall be made white like the wings of a dove, covered with silver, whose feathers are of yellow gold. Oh, saith Paul, I am as one impatient till I be above, where I shall be clothed with those excellent and cleanly robes, 'the righteousness of Christ.' Oh! saith Paul, I think every day a year till I be possessed of that kingdom where Satan cannot tempt, and the creature cannot yield, and where I shall be free from all my fears of sinning. Now, in all these respects, who would not desire to die? But to guard all these, I would give you these four cautions:

1. *Caution.* Your desire to die should not be peremptory, but ye should desire to die with submission to the will of God, so that although he would fill up fifteen years more to your life, ye should be content to live it out.

2. *Caution.* When your desires are hasty, and off hand, suspect them; for some, when they meet with an outward cross, without all deliberation, will cry out, 'O to be gone, O that I were dead!' But your desire to die should be deliberate, but not hasty or rash.

3. *Caution.* It is not lawful to desire to die because of personal afflictions. Many, when they meet with bitter afflictions, will cry out, 'O to be gone;' they long for death even upon that account. Such was Job's desire, Job xxi. 22. and chap. vi. verse 8, 9. 'O that I might have my request, even that it would please God to destroy me.' This desire was very unlawful.

4. *Caution.* It is not lawful to desire to die, when thy predominant idol is taken away from thee; yet such was Jonah's desire, chap. iv. 3. Jonah thought his credit and reputation (which was his idol) was gone, and could never be regained; therefore he wished to die. But I would say this to you, that some will have ten desires for death, when they have not one desire for heaven. And what moveth Christians to be so desirous to die, It is not so much because of their hope, as because of their anxiety; it is not so much because of their confidence, as because of their impatience. But I say unto you, when your desires of death are not accompanied with desires of heaven, suspect them. 2. I would say this, that there are some who will have ten desires for death, when they will not have one for the death of the body of death; but it were good for thee (who are such) to be desiring the death of the body of death, then shouldst thou be in a more suitable frame to desire to die.

3. Some will have hearty desires to die, and yet when death cometh, they will be as unwilling to die as any. It hath been observed, that some, who have much desire to die, whendeath came have cried out, O spare a little, that I may recover strength, &c.

There is a great difference between a desire to die, and death itself. It is an easy thing to desire to die, but it is a very great business to meet with death, and to look it in the face when it cometh. We think death, ere it come near us, to be but children's play; but when we meet with it, it maketh us change our thoughts, for it is a great business to die.

Quest. 2. Is it lawful for a Christian to desire to live when he is summoned to die?

Ans. In some cases it is lawful for a Christian to desire to live, even when he is summoned to die; which is clear from the practice of David, Psalm xxxix. 13. where he prayeth, that the Lord would spare him a little. It is also clear from the practice of good Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 3. when he was commanded 'to set his house in order, for he should die, and not live,' he crieth

out, 'Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight, and Hezekiah wept sore:' or, as the words are in the original, 'he wept with great weeping.' But to guard this, take these two cautions.

Caution 1. Thy desire to live, when thou art summoned to die, should not be peremptory, but with submission to the will of God, that if it be his pleasure to remove thee presently out of time, thou shouldst be content to die.

Caution 2. Thy desires to live should have gracious principles, and also a very gracious end; as is most clear from David, Psalm xxxix. 13. where he saith, 'O spare me a little, that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more.' His desire to live was, that he might have victory over his idols. As if he had said, my desire to live is, that I may have strength to wrestle with, and overcome my idols. And without all controversy, Hezekiah's desire was a most precious and well-grounded desire. However, I would say this unto thee, that thou shouldst examine thy desires to live (as much, if not more) as thy desires to die; for we are ready to shun death, if we could; but he is that universal king, unto whom all of us must be subject ere long.

Now in the words which are read unto you, there are these six things, which might be clearly observed from them.

I. *First*, That it is a most clear and infallible truth, that all persons shall once see death, as is clear in these words, 'who is he that liveth, and shall not see death?'

II. *Secondly*, That this truth, that we shall once see death, is not much believed or thought upon by many: therefore it is that the Psalmist doubteth the assertion, 'What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul (that is, his life) from the hand, (that is) from the power of the grave.'

III. *Thirdly*, That sometimes a Christian may win to the solid faith of this truth, that once he must die; this the Psalmist won unto, as it is also clear in that word (who) 'Who is he that liveth, and shall not see death?'

IV. *Fourthly*, That the certainty of this, that once we shall die, should be still kept in our mind; therefore that note of attention, Selah, is put to it. As if he had said, take heed, that there is none living that shall not die.

V. *Fifthly*, That howbeit some persons put the evil day far away, as if they were not to see death; yet is the day coming when they shall see death, and death shall take them by the hand.

VI. *Sixthly*, We shall take notice of this from the context, that the Christian who is much in minding the brevity of his life,

will believe the certainty of his death: the Psalmist was speaking of the shortness of his life in the preceding verse, and in this verse he speaketh of the certainty of death.

Now as for the *First* of these things observed, viz. that it is certain and most sure that we shall all once die, I hope there are none of you here who will deny, although I confess some few of you believe what was said by the woman of Tekoah, 2 Sam. xiv. 14. "We must all die, and be like water spilt upon the ground, that cannot be gathered up again. God doth not accept the person of any." And Job xxx. 23. "I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." And it is very clear, Eccles. viii. 8. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war, neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it." It is clear, Heb. ix. 27. 'It is appointed unto men once to die.' So that it is most clear that we must die. I remember of one Philip, king of Macedonia, who had one substitute for this very end, to cry at his chamber-door every morning, *Memento mori, memento mori, memento mori*, Remember thou art to die. And it is reported to have been the practice of the nobles of Greece, that on the day wherein their emperor was crowned, that they presented a marble-stone unto him, and he was enquired, after what fashion he would have his tomb-stone made. Which practice speaks forth this unto us, that although these were most destitute of the light of the scripture, they were very mindful of death. Believe me, death may surprise us before we be aware; for it is most certain that we must die; but there is nothing more uncertain than the way how, and the time when we shall die.

Death will surprise some, as it did Abel in the open field, Gen iv. 8. Death will surprise some, as it did Eglon in his parlour, Judges iii. 21. And death will surprise some, as it did Saul and Jonathan in the fight, 1 Sam. xxxi.

Now in speaking to this point, I shall, *First*, speak a little to those advantages which attend those that live within continual sight of death. *Secondly*, I shall give you some considerations to press you to prepare for death. *Thirdly*, I shall give you some directions to help you to prepare for death. And then we shall proceed unto the *Second* point of doctrine, which we observed from the text, and I shall speak a few things from it unto you, and so come to a close for this time.

First, then, we conceive there are these seven advantages which attend those who live with the continual sight of this truth that they must die.

I. *First*, The faith of approaching death will make a soul ex-

ceeding diligent in duty; this was our blessed Lord's divinity, John ix. 3. 'I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work;' that is, death is approaching, therefore I must work. It is clear also, 2 Pet i. 12. compared with verse 14. In the 12 verse, Peter is exceeding diligent in his duty, and the ground of his diligence is in the 14th verse, 'Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, &c. Yet it is even the Epicure's argument, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.' And should not the Christian much more cry out, 'Let me watch and pray, for to-morrow I may die? I say, if the Epicures did make use of this notion, to make them vigorous in the pursuit of their pleasures, O how much more should a Christian improve it, for making him vigorous in the pursuit of his duty? Therefore I say unto you all, O be ye diligent, for your night is drawing near. O Christians, and expectants of heaven, are ye not afraid lest ye be nighted before ye have walked the half of your journey? For if ye be nighted on your journey to heaven, before ye come to the end of your race, there is no retiring place whereunto ye may turn aside to lodge. Therefore, 'O work, work, work, while it is to-day;' for behold death is approaching, and then we shall all be called to an account.

II. The faith of approaching death will make a Christian exceeding active in duty; he will not only be diligent, but also exceeding serious, and zealous in the exercise of his duty: this is clear from that notable exhortation, Eccles ix. 10. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all my might:' and the reason is, 'for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.' Wherefore, O be active while ye are alive, for ye shall never work any more after ye are dead; and if ye leave but one work undone, there is no doing of it after death. 'There is no work (saith Solomon) in the grave:' therefore, O be active.

III. The faith of this truth, that we must all die, will help a Christian to be exceeding mortified to the things of a present world. Oh! covetous men and women, would ye shake hands with cold death but once every morning; I should defy you to pursue the world so much as you do. Paul was much in the meditation of his change, which made him, 2 Cor. iv. 18. to overlook those things that are temporary, "while we look not (saith he) at the things which are seen, which are temporal; but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal:" therefore, chap. v. 1, 2. "Knowing, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens: therefore in this we groan

earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." What aileth you Paul (might one have said), may ye not take a look of the world? No, saith he, 'For I know, that if this earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, I have a house with God, not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens:' that is, I know that ere long the pins of my tabernacle will be loosed, and it will fall down about my ears: therefore I must look for another dwelling-house. And 1 Cor. vii. 31. 'The fashion of this world passeth away.' Therefore, saith he, verse 32. 'I would have you without carefulness, caring how to please the Lord.' And Philip. iv. 5. 'Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.' As if he had said, death is approaching, and at hand; therefore I intreat you be sober. But I think many of us will be found like Saul, hid among the stuff; that is, we will be lying amongst the midst of the pleasures of this passing world. But I say unto thee, who art such an one, that death will break the strings of thy harp, thy music will quickly cease. O but death will make thee have a low esteem of the world. O blessed is the person who hath those thoughts of the world all along his way, which he shall have of it at death! Have not the most cursed wretches been forced to cry out, Oh! I would give ten thousand worlds for Christ? Have not some persons (who have had the moon upon their head, and that have made their belly their god) been forced to cry out at death, O cursed person that I am, that ever made the world my God? Alas! that I contented myself with the world. Therefore I say unto thee, who art such an one, O stay thy pursuit after the world, for death is approaching, that will cause all thy earthly comforts to evanish.

IV. When a Christian believeth this truth, that he must die, it will be an exceeding great restraint to keep him from sinning; as is clear, Job xxxi. 13 compared with ver. 14. where Job, reckoning over many good deeds done by himself, saith, 'What then shall I do when God ariseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?' As if he had said, sirs, mistake me not, I am not boasting much of myself, for I could not have done otherwise, else what should I do when God riseth up? how could I answer to God if I had done otherwise. I think it were a notable practice of each of you to say, O temptation, what will I answer to God, when he riseth up to reprove me, if I should yield unto thee? Likewise, Eccles. xi. 9. where Solomon, dissuading young men to pursue after their vanity, bringeth this as a reason, 'know ye, that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. Therefore, I say unto thee, who art often tempted to sin, let death and reckoning with God be still in thy sight, and I defy thee then to embrace half so many temptations as now thou

doest. I intreat you to answer all your temptations with that word, 'What shall I do when God riseth up? and what shall I answer when he visiteth me?

V. When a Christian liveth within the sight of this truth, that he shall once see death, it will make him exceeding patient under every cross which he meeteth. Such a Christian will hardly meet with a cross, but he will quiet himself with this, death will put me beyond this cross, this is but a cloud that will quickly pass away. And for this cause did David so composedly put up that desire, Psalm xxxix. 4. 'Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days.' He was sure that the knowledge of his end would put him in a sober and patient frame.

VI. The *Sixth* advantage is this, the faith of approaching death will teach the person who hath it, to study saving wisdom. This is clear, Psalm xc. 12. where Moses putteth up his request, so 'teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.' As if he had said, I will never think myself wise, till I know that blessed part of arithmetic, 'how to number my days.' I would desire every one of you to think with yourself, every morning when you rise, now I am a day nearer unto eternity than I was before; and at the end of every hour, now I am an hour nearer unto eternity than I was before; I say, think often, yea, always thus, I was never so near my death as I am now; for, oh! are we not all nearer unto eternity to-day than we were yesterday?

VII. The *Seventh* advantage attending the faith of approaching death, is this, that it will make a Christian very careful in preparing for death. It is impossible for one really to believe that death is approaching, and not to prepare for it? Say what ye will, if ye be not careful in preparing for death, ye have not the solid faith of this truth, that ye shall die. Believe me, it is not every one who thinketh he believeth this truth, that believeth it indeed. And O how dreadful is it for an unprepared man to meet with death? He desireth not to die, yea, he would give a world for his life; but die he must, whether he will or not: for death will not be requested to spare a little when he cometh. And therefore I say unto you all, 'set your house in order, for ye shall surely die.' Old men and women, 'set your house in order, for to-morrow ye may die, and be cut off in the flower of your age.' Think not that there be many who can sell time: for I say, ye shall never get time sold unto you. Alas! I fear that the most part of persons who die now, death findeth them at unawares: for indeed the persons who die amongst us, when we come to visit them, we may give you a sad account of them, for we think they are comprehended under these four sorts.

1. *First*, When we go to visit some persons on their death-beds, they are like unto Nabal, 'their heart is dying and sinking

(like unto a stone) 'within them,' they are no more affected with death than if it were a fancy; alas! for the great stupidity that hath overtaken many; therefore I intreat you delay not your repentance till death, lest the Lord take away your wit, so that ye cannot repent for your senselessness and stupid frame of spirit.

2. A *Second* sort we find in a presumptuous frame, saying, they have had a good hope all their days, and they will not quit it now; they will go down to their grave with their hope in their right hand, or rather they will go down to the grave 'with a lie in their right hand;' they live in a presumptuous frame, and they die in the same delusion. For when we tell them by all probability they are going down to hell, they answer, God forbid, I was all my time a very honest man, or woman. But I love not that confession, for there are many such honest men and women in hell this day.

3. The *Third* sort we find having some convictions that they have been playing the fool all their days; but we can get them no further: I shall only say to such, to go down to the grave with convictions in their breasts, not making use of Christ, is to go down to hell with a candle in their hand, to let them see the way: and truly the greatest part that die, die in that manner.

4. *Fourthly*, There are some whom we find in a self-righteous frame, resting upon the covenant of works, and their own merits, and trusting by these to go to heaven, yet neglecting the offer of Christ's righteousness. But, alas! we find not one of a thousand of this frame, 'I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all.' And scarce do we find any in such a frame, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!' therefore I say this unto all who are here, O! will ye mind death, before it take hold on you? Oh! mind your work now; for ye will find that death will be work enough for itself, though you leave no work till then.

VIII. The *eighth* advantage that attendeth the Christian in believing this truth, that once he must die, is this, death will not be so terrible to him as it is unto many when it cometh. What (think ye) maketh death a 'king of terrors?' What maketh many to shake as the leaf of a tree, when they are summoned to appear before God's tribunal? It is even because of this, they have not been thinking on death before it came, so as to prepare for it. And I fear many in this place may be afraid for death, and that when it cometh to them, they will say unto death, as Ahab said to Elijah, 'hast thou found me, O mine enemy?' Surely death will take you, and bring you to the judgment-seat of Christ; therefore study by all means to think often upon it, and make ready for it. Believe me, death is a very big word, for it

will once make you stand with horror in your souls, if your peace be not made up with God: I know not a more dreadful dispensation than death and a guilty conscience meeting together.

The *Second* thing which I shall speak unto from this *first* observation, (viz this is a most certain and infallible truth, that all persons shall once see death) shall be to give you some considerations for pressing you to prepare for death.

The *First* consideration is this, 'to die well, and in the Lord, is a most difficult work; therefore I intreat you to prepare for death. It is a difficult work to communicate aright, it is a difficult work to pray aright, and it is a difficult work to confer aright; I must tell you, it is a more difficult work to die aright, than any of these. It is true, it is more difficult to communicate aright, than to pray aright, yet it is much more difficult to die aright, than to communicate aright, for it is a more difficult work to die in the Lord. Death will put the most accurate Christian that is here to a wonderful search; and therefore I will tell you nine things that death will try in thee; 1. Death will try both the reality and strength of thy faith. It may be easy for thee to keep up faith under many difficulties, but death will put thy faith to the greatest stress that ever it did meet with. Yea, know this, that the faith of the strongest believer may get (and ordinarily doth get) a set at death, the like whereof it never got before; therefore, prepare for death. 2. Death will try thy love to God. Some persons pretend much love to him, but death will propose this question to such a person, 'Lovest thou him more than these? Lovest thou him more than thy wife, more than thy house, more than thy friends?' But your unwillingness to die, giveth us much ground to fear that many hath little love to Christ, but much to the world, and so dare not answer the question, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.' 3. Death will try thine enjoyments; some of you may be ready to think that ye meet with many enjoyments, so that ye may reckon (as you think) to forty enjoyments and sweet out-lettings; but beware that death bring them not down to twenty. I have known some, who thought they have met forty times with God, but when death came, it made them take down the count to the half; therefore seeing death will try the reality of thine enjoyments, O prepare for it. 4. Death will try thy patience. Thou may seem to have much patience now, but when death cometh (and thou art put to die) it will put thy patience to a great trial, therefore prepare for it. 5. Death will try the reality of thy duties, yea, even those duties wherein thou had most satisfaction; as thy communicating aright in such a place, thou hopest that is sure; thy reading the scripture at such a time aright, thou hopest that is sure;

thou prayed at such a time aright, and hopest that is sure; thou meditated in such a place aright, and hopest that is sure: but (believe me) death may make thee change thy thoughts; for there are some persons who have communicated, and prayed, &c. as right as any in this generation, who (for all that) will not find six duties wherein they can find satisfaction at death; therefore our need is great to prepare for it. 6. Death will exceedingly try thy sincerity when it cometh. An hypocrite may go his whole way undiscovered, yet death may bring him to light, and make it appear what man he is. 7. Death will discover unto thee many hid and secret sins of which thou never had a thought before, yea, albeit thou thought these had been forgotten, death will let thee see them standing between thee and the light of his countenance. 8 Death will accurately try thy mortification. Some will think they have come a great length in mortification; but (believe me) death will try it, and put it to the touch-stone. 9. Death will try thy hope, whether it be real or not. I shall only say this, that all the other graces must low the sail to faith, and so it is faith must carry us through, being that last triumphing grace which must fit the field for us when all the other graces will faint and lie by. It is faith that must enter us fairly within the borders of eternity; it is faith that must gainstand all the temptations of death, yea, all the other graces must, as it were, stand by, and see faith strike the last stroke in the war.

II. The *second* consideration to press you to mind death, is this, that ye are to die but once, and the wrong doing of which can never be helped. If ye pray not aright, ye may get that mended; if ye meditate not aright, ye may get that mended; and if ye communicate not aright, ye may get that mended; but alas! if ye die not aright, there is no mending of that; therefore, O prepare for death, that ye may die well, seeing ye are to die but once.

III. The *third* consideration to press you to mind death, is this, that they are pronounced blessed who die in the Lord, Rev. xiv. 13. 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.' O let that provoke you to prepare for death, that so ye may die in the Lord, that is the only way to make you eternally happy. I confess it is a question difficult to determine, whether it be more difficult to die well or to live well? I shall not answer it, but rather desire you to study both.

IV. The *fourth* consideration to press you to prepare for death, is this, that though thou put all thy works by thy hand before death, yet shalt thou find that death shall have work enough for itself, yea, as much as thou shalt get done. It will then be much for thee to win to patience, it will be much for

thee to win to the sight of thy justification; and it will then be much more for thee to win to assurance. O! then is it not needful for thee to put all thy work by hand before thy latter end come? Wherefore I may say to you, as Moses said in his song, Deut. xxxii. 29. 'O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter-end!' O that ye had this piece of divine wisdom! I pray you consider that sad word, Lam. i. 9. 'She remembereth not her last end;' and what of it? 'therefore she came down wonderfully.' So will the down-coming of many in this generation be wonderful, who consider not their last end.

V. The *fifth* consideration for pressing you to prepare for death is this, that their labour shall end, but their work shall not be forgotten; as is clear from that forecited place, Rev. xiv. 13. 'They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.' And is not that a glorious advantage?

VI. The *sixth* consideration to press you to prepare for death, is this, that death may come upon you ere ye be aware. Ye know not but death may surprise you this night before ye go to your houses; and therefore let that press you to study constant preparation for death.

VII. The *seventh* consideration to press you to prepare for death, is this, 'that as death leaveth you, so will judgment find you.' If death shall leave you strangers to Christ, ye shall appear before him strangers to him; therefore I intreat you all to prepare for it. I think that noble practice of Paul exceeding worthy of imitation, 1 Cor. xv. 31. 'I die daily.' Which I think doth comprehend these three things; 1. That Paul had death always in his sight. 2. It comprehendeth this, that he endeavoured to keep such a frame as every moment he should be ready to die; so that whensoever death should put a summons in his hand, he would be content to answer. 3. It comprehendeth this, that he laboureth to lay aside, and remove all things out of the way, that might detain him from laying down his tabernacle. O! saith Paul, I labour to clear myself of all hinderances, as that whenever I shall be summoned to remove out of time, I may willingly lay down my life. Therefore I would ask you this question, When shall you make your last testament? I think it were suitable for us to be renewing our latter-will every day: for in so doing, Paul made an excellent testament, the better of which none that died since have made, 2 Tim iv. 7, 8. 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.' these are very sweet articles; and then he addeth, 'henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.' And think

ye not that very sweet, that he would leave something unto you in Christ's name? viz. 'And that not for me only, but for all them that wait for his appearance.' Now I come to the *third* thing proposed, viz. To give some directions for helping you to prepare for death.

Direct. 1. I intreat you to be much in preparation for death every day, for it is even a preparation for heaven to be taking a sight of your grave and latter end every day.

Direct. 2. I intreat you be much in these duties; *First*, In self-examination; that your counts may be clear with God, for many a ragged count shall we have when death and we shall meet. *Secondly*, Be much in the exercise of repentance, that so ye may have every fault and corruption in you mourned for, before death and you meet. *Thirdly*, Be much in the exercise of faith, 'making your calling and election sure.' *Fourthly*, Be much in the exercise of mortification, and that will help you to keep a loose grip, not only of the world, but also of your idols; and if ye be much in these, ye shall undoubtedly be prepared for death.

Direct. 3. Be much in minding the excellent things of heaven. A Christian that would be prepared for death, should have all his thoughts and conversation there. I think it would be an excellent help (in preparation for death) to take a sight of the crown every day.

Direct 4. 'Labour always to keep a good conscience, void of offence towards God and man:' I say, labour to keep thy conscience clear, and that shall be a continual feast unto thee.

Direct. 5. Slight not thy known duty, do not crucify any conviction, neither break any resolution, put these three together, and that will exceedingly help you to prepare for death: I say, see that ye adventure not to slight any known duty; see that ye adventure not to crucify any conviction, and see that ye adventure not to break your resolutions.

Now we come to the *second* thing which we observed from the words, viz. That this truth, that we shall once see death, is not much believed by any of us. And to make this appear, we shall only give some evidences unto you, to prove that we are not as yet prepared for death.

I. *Evidence.* Doth not the unspeakable stupidity that hath overtaken many, say that we are not a people prepared for death? Alas! many of us would find ourselves in a most stupid temper, if we were presently to die; for many of us are no more moved with the threatenings and terrors of God, than if they did not belong unto us; and this saith we are not as yet prepared for death.

II. *Evidence.* That we are not prepared for death, is our pur-

suing so much after the vain and passing delights of a present world. Many of us rise up early, and go late to bed at night, and eat the bread of sorrow all the day, and load ourselves with the thick clay;' and I am sure that such a person (being night and day taken up with the world) is not prepared for death. I remember a word recorded of such a wretched one, who was exceedingly rich, said he, I would give so many thousands of money, if death will give me but one day: yet he got it not. And, O how suddenly will death surprise many of us, as it did him.

III. *Evidence.* Which speaketh forth our unpreparedness for death, is our impatience under every petty cross that we meet with; for the prepared Christian will be patient under very sharp crosses.

IV. *Evidence.* That we are not prepared, is our not endeavouring to live within sight of our interest in God. Oh! if we were prepared for death, durst we live in so much uncertainty of our interest in God, and of our assurance of heaven?

V. *Evidence.* Some of us can let our idols lie in our breast six years without repentance, and will never study to mortify them, nor to repent of them; and surely such are not prepared for death

Now I intreat you seriously to mind what hath been said: and that ye may the more seriously think upon it, I will tell you some material challenges that your conscience at death will present unto you, therefore take heed that ye may know how ye will answer.

1. *Challenge*, Is the slighting of much precious time, and sinning away the precious offers of grace. O what will ye answer to that challenge when death shall present it unto you? Death will say (or rather thine own conscience at death) what ailed thee to sin so many hours without either praying, reading, or meditating? Now have ye any thing to answer when death shall present his challenge to you? I intreat you to premeditate what ye will say: I intreat you prevent death, by presenting it first seriously to yourselves.

2. *Challenge.* That death will present unto you, will be for the killing of many precious convictions which ye have had. What will each of you answer at death, when your conscience proposeth this challenge unto you? Thou met with such a challenge at such a time, and went home and crucified it: when, at another time, thou met with another challenge, and went home and crucified it; these challenges will be laid to thy door, therefore think on them.

3. *Challenge.* Death will challenge you for a formal hypocritical way of going about duties; I say, your conscience will then

tell you that ye went to such a communion with a selfish end: and at another time ye prayed hypocritically and formally. And what will ye have to answer when ye meet with these challenges? is I confess I know not what ye can answer to these, but I charge you, be thinking what ye will answer, for it may be that these convictions shall lye on your consciences, that even this day ye have heard two searching sermons, and did meet with some convictions, but made no good use of them, yea, and it may be ye did sleep all the time. O! what will ye answer, when it shall be said to you, ye went to such a sermon, and slept all the time? and ye went to such a communion, but no other end before your eyes, but to be seen of men? I intreat you consider presently what ye will answer to these.

4. *Challenge*, Will be for your breaking of many precious resolutions. It will be said to some of you, that at the communion in this place, ye took on vows, and did break them; I am sure ye cannot question the justice of the challenge, therefore see what ye will answer.

5. *Challenge*, Ye slighted many precious offers of the gospel. O men and women in this city, what will ye answer to this, I was often exhorted to take Christ, and yet would never take him? What will conscience say to that, when death shall table it before you? I tell you what ye must then answer: O cursed I, that ever I refused Christ in the gospel. And ye shall then be confounded because this is your sin; believe me, there was never an offer of this everlasting gospel, and of Christ in it, made unto you, that shall not at death (before or after) be brought to your remembrance. And O! how sad and doleful will it be to you, when Christ shall open the book wherein all your sins are written, and begin with the sin of slighting the great salvation? Thus I invited you, when ye were twelve years old, but ye would not come. What will ye answer to this? Have ye any thing to say? Or must ye not stand speechless before your Judge, when he shall put home this challenge unto you? Therefore think seriously upon it, how ye will answer it.

6. *Challenge*, Will be for your sinning oftentimes against light; and, O! how painful and sad a challenge will that be at the day of death, when it will be said, thou sinnedst with a witness in thy bosom that thou wast doing wrong? thy conscience will say, oftentimes did I tell thee, this is sinful, yet wouldst thou not abstain from it; and what will ye answer to this?

7. *Challenge*, Oftentimes ye sinned upon very small temptation, and what will ye answer to that? must ye not then confess it, and say, O! how often have I deserted Christ, and embraced my idols upon a small temptation? Now I intreat you,

be thinking what ye will answer to these seven most material challenges, which certainly shall be presented to you at death. I assure you, ye must either answer all your challenges in Christ, else ye will not get them well answered. Therefore I would exhort you to embrace the gospel, and Christ in it; and so let death propose never so many challenges unto you, ye may answer them all as David did, viz. 'God hath made with me an everlasting covenant (and that will answer all your challenges), though my house be not so with God,' yet I have the everlasting covenant to build my salvation upon.

Now to press you to make use of Christ, I shall give you these four considerations.

Consideration 1. If ye embrace not Christ now, death will be very unpleasant to you. O what else can comfort thee, when going through the region of the shadow of death, but this, 'I am Christ's, I am Christ's?' Is there any other thing can comfort thee in that day, but only this, 'I am Christ's, and he is mine?'

Consideration 2. If ye embrace not Christ, and the great salvation now, it will be an hundred to one if ever ye get time or liberty to do it when ye are going to die. For although many delay their closing with Christ till death, yet scarcely one of an hundred getteth favour to lay hold on Christ at death; therefore think on it, for ye will not get your mind so composed at death as ye imagine, nor all things done as ye suppose: therefore now embrace the great salvation.

Consideration 3. If ye delay your closing with Christ till death seize upon you, ye shall never be able to make up that loss: for will the dead rise and praise God? or shall any come from the land of forgetfulness, to take hold upon a crucified Saviour? Therefore, O! will ye take him for your salvation?

Consideration 4. If ye will take Christ now, he shall be your guide, 'when ye are going through the valley and shadow of death.' And O how blessed is the person that can sing that song, Psalm xlviii. 14. 'This is my God, he will be my guide even unto death.' If ye can sing that pleasant song, O how may ye be comforted, when your eye-strings shall begin to break? O how happy is he who can say, 'though I walk through the shadow of death, yet will I fear no ill;' for I know the Lord is with me? Now this is the acceptable day, and the year of salvation; therefore do not delay, but embrace Christ, lest death surprise you ere ye be aware, and so that acceptable day be lost. But unto those who think they may delay till death, I say, surely there are many damned atheists in hell, that sometimes did think as ye think; I will make all wrongs right when death and I shall meet; I hope

that three days repentance will satisfy for all my wrong. For I am sure, there are many in hell, who did never get three days to think upon their former ways; therefore O come, come, and embrace Christ presently. Now are ye all persuaded of this truth, that ye shall once see death? Then study a tender walking; for, believe me, here are many of us who shall go through death with many bruised bones, because of untender walking before God. We know it is not the multitude of words can persuade you to embrace Christ, for many of you never minded the thing. But, believe me, death will preach these things to you in a more terrible manner than we can do at this time. Therefore I say to each of you, 'O prepare to meet thy God;' for if death find you in an estranged state from God, I defy the angels in heaven to free you out of that estate: and the day is coming, wherein thou shalt cry out, O slighter of the great salvation that I am, I would give ten thousand worlds for one sermon again that I once heard wherein Christ was freely offered to me: when thou shalt be tormented without hope of remedy; therefore, 'while it is to-day, harden not your hearts,' for your late wishes shall not be granted (when ye are gone) if ye make not haste. O therefore, haste, haste in time, and come out from the land of your captivity, and from the house of your bondage, and take Christ for your Redeemer, the guide of your youth, and old age. Now unto him, who can lead you through all the steps betwixt you and heaven, be eternal praise. *Amen.*

GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES.

SERMON I.

2 PETER i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

MAY we not truly say, that if ever the Christians who live in these days shall be advanced to stand within the holy place, and shall inherit everlasting life, all those who are now before his throne, may lay aside their harps, and give us leave to sing.

Will it not be a mystery, suppose ye, unto heavenly Enoch, who spent so much of his time in communion and fellowship with God, when he shall behold such Christians within that everlasting rest, who have spent so little of their time in corresponding with God? Will it not be a mystery unto believing Abraham, when he shall behold such misbelievers, such disputers of the promises of God, advanced to reign with Christ? Will it not be a mystery unto wrestling Jacob, when he shall behold those Christians crowned with immortal glory, who did so little know what it was as princes to wrestle with God, till they did prevail? Will it not be a wonder to patient Job, when he shall behold such impatient Christians, as we have been, entering into that blessed place of repose? Will it not be a mystery unto holy David, when he shall behold such unmortified Christians entering within that city, into which no unclean thing doth enter? Will it not be a mystery unto tender Josiah, to behold such Christians as we are, who have our hearts dying as a stone within us, entering into heaven? Will it not be a mystery unto upright Nathaniel, to behold such hypocritical Christians, as the most part of us are, entering within the holy place? And to see those, who hath been clothed with hypocrisy and guile, now clothed with the robes of immortal glory? And will it not be a mystery unto self-denied Paul, when he shall behold such proud and selfish Christians enter into heaven? Give me leave to say this, go where we will, we shall be matchless and singular; for if we shall go into eternity of pain, we shall be the greatest debtors unto the infinite justice of God, in regard of the mercies we have received: and if we shall enter into eternity of joy, we shall be the greatest debtors unto the spotless grace of Christ, in regard of the mercies we have abused. There shall be none in heaven like unto us; and if we shall go to hell, there shall be few there that may be compared unto us. And let me but add this further before I come to the words, go where we will, we shall be out of doubt with our condition; within a short time we shall be exalted above the reach of this misbelieving; a hypocrite shall be depressed below the reach of his faith; and one who is gross in nature, shall be abased beyond the reach of his presumption; a Christian ere long shall misbelieve no more: a hypocrite ere long shall believe no more; and one who is gross in nature, shall ere long presume no more; there is no misbelief in heaven, and there is no faith nor presumption of well-being in hell. But to come to that which we intend to speak to, we told you, when we first began our discourse upon that precious and exalted grace of faith, under a twofold notion and consideration; *First*, As it is justifying; and *Secondly*, As it is sanctifying. For the *First*, we

resolve to speak to it in a twofold consideration; *First*, As it closeth with Christ simply as the object upon which it resteth; and of this we have spoken from that place, 1 John iii. 23. *Secondly*, As it closeth with Christ, as is held forth in the promises; and now being to speak of it in this consideration, we have made choice of this place, in which these things concerning the promise shortly; 1. Ye have that fountain and spring, from whence the promises do flow, holden forth in the first words of the verse, *whereby* (or, as the words may be more fitly rendered), *by whom*, relating unto Jesus Christ, who is the original and spring of all the promises.

2. The properties of the promises; and these are, 1. The freedom of the promises, held forth in that word, *given*; Whereby are given; which speaketh this, that the promises are free gifts, flowing only from good pleasure. 2. Their unchangeableness, and that is holden forth in the word, *given*: the gifts and calling of God being without repentance. 3. That they are exceeding great; and the promises are called great, either in respect of the price that was laid down to purchase them; or they are called great, in respect of the great things that are contained in them. 2. That they are *precious*. Now the promises are called precious either in respect of their original, that they come from precious Christ; or else in respect of this, that they are the object (I mean the object *quo*, or by which) of precious faith, as it is called in the first verse of this chapter; or else they are precious, because they are the things which a Christian ought to put an high esteem upon. For the word that is rendered *precious*, may likewise be rendered honourable. 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and *honourable* promises.'

3. We have holden forth in the words, the great advantages of the promises; 'by them we are made partakers of the divine nature.' Now this is not to be understood of any essential conversion of our substance into the substance of God, but of a Christian having the divine virtues of Jesus Christ impressed upon his soul, and expressed in his life and conversation.

And there is this, *Lastly*, concerning the promises in the word, 'even the time when the promises are eminently accomplished;' it is, 'when we have escaped,' or, as the word is, 'when we have fled from the corruptions that are in the world through lust;' that is the time when a Christian meeteth with the accomplishment of the promise.

Now, before we can speak to any of these, we must speak a little unto some things as necessary to be known, in order to the better understanding of all. 1 We shall not dwell long in pointing out unto you what a promise is, we conceive it is a glorious

discovery of the good will of God towards sinners, and withal a purpose and intendment, and (if we may say) an engagement to bestow some spiritual or temporal good upon them, or to withhold some spiritual or temporal evil from them. And certain it is, that in this description of the promise, there is a divine harmony betwixt mercy and truth, betwixt righteousness and peace, they kiss one another. Neither shall we stand long to point out the distinction of the promises. 1. There are some promises that are conditional, and there are some promises that are absolute. Absolute promises are those that have no conditions annexed unto the performance of them; such a promise as is this, 'God will destroy the world no more by water:' that is an absolute promise; such a promise was that of 'God's sending his Son into the world,' that was an absolute promise; and such is that promise of conversion, 'in giving of the hearts of flesh,' it is an absolute promise. As for the conditional promises, they are those that do require some condition to be performed by the Christian before the accomplishment of the promises; such as the promise of salvation, it requireth believing to go before it; 'he that believeth, shall be saved.' And pardon is promised unto a Christian upon repentance; and yet, we confess, that there is not a conditional promise in all the covenant of grace but may be reduced into an absolute promise, in regard that the thing promised (in the conditional promise) is an absolute free gift, and the condition of the promise is another. 2. There are some promises that are temporal, and some that are spiritual; temporal promises are those that promise some temporal thing unto a Christian; and spiritual promises are those that promise the bestowing of some thing that is of everlasting concernment. 3. There are some promises that are not accomplished in this life; such as this, 'that we shall see him as he is, and shall be made like unto him.' But for the promises of faith and justification, these are accomplished in this life. 4. There are some promises that are extraordinary, and there are some promises that are common; extraordinary promises are those that are given to some particular believers as a singular privilege; such was the promise that was given to Abraham, 'in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed;' and that promise which was given to Rebecca, 'that the elder should serve the younger.' As for common promises, they are those that every believer in Christ hath a right to make use of.

Neither shall we stand long to point out, that it is the duty of a Christian to be much in the exercise of faith upon the promises; it is clear from Psalm lxii. 8. 'Trust in him at all times ye people.' And it is clear, from the practice of that precious cloud of witnesses, recorded in Heb. xi. who spent their days in em-

bracing of the promises. But, 7. we would have you consider, that it is more easy for a Christian believer to believe spiritual promises, than to believe temporal promises: it is easier to trust Christ for eternal salvation, than to trust him for our daily food when we are reduced unto straits. And the grounds upon which we assert this, may be these, 1. Because it is hard for a Christian to believe that Christ's death reacheth for the purchasing of temporal promises, which more easily he taketh up in spiritual promises: for a Christian can hardly believe that such a thing was in Christ's intention, as to die for his daily food; which is most certain, if we consider it is a special mercy. 2. In a Christian's believing of spiritual promises, there is often some sense and reason that helpeth him to the exercise of faith, at least they press not the contrary. But believe a temporal promise, when a Christian is reduced unto a strait, and he can see no outgate at present, sense and reason stands upon the top of his faith, and presseth him to despair: as for instance, when a Christian is living upon the top of a mountain, and knoweth not where to sup at night, to believe that there is a promise upon which he may rest, that he shall not want his food, but that the Lord hath service for him, he will provide here; he hath not only reason to dispute against it, but the strong pinching sense of hunger, both crying out, 'how can bread be given in the wilderness?' 3. The temptations that assault a Christian, to misbelieve temporal promises, are more suitable, and co-natural to a Christian, than the temptations that assault him in resting upon the spiritual promises. When a Christian is in straits in the world, the temptations that hinder his exercise of faith are more consonant to flesh and blood. We are ready to yield to misbelief then, because we think it is rational, and speaketh the truth. 4. A Christian is often so affrighted by his daily failings, or some particular more gross out-breakings in his life, that howbeit he may, through grace, be helped to believe that the Lord shall make out these promises which concern his great salvation, and so do him good in his latter end: yet he may be sadly perplexed and distrustful, in making use of any particular temporary promise, for drawing forth any comfort or encouragement therefrom as to this present exigent; because he knoweth, although the Lord doth forgive his peoples iniquities, yet he may take vengeance on their inventions, Psalm xcix. 8. and therefore may punish his present failing with the like calamities as he had done others. 5. There is also much of a natural and carnal self-love to a present life remaining in the best, that we are many times worse to satisfy in our securities for the things of this life, than that which is to come; and can more easily trust the Lord for

our souls, than for our bodies; so that though his naked word will sometimes satisfy us for the one, yet it will not for the other. And the *last* ground of it may be with a Christian's unacquaintedness with that lot of exercising faith upon temporal promises; there being many who think that there is no use for faith, except for salvation, and the things above, which maketh his faith upon these more difficult, than upon promises that are spiritual. And this may appear most clearly, in that we find men more easily bear their spiritual wants (even a Christian who is most exercised) than they bear their temporal wants. And more corruption and impatience doth arise from temporal want, than from spiritual want.

2. Consider, that all a Christian's duties are turned over into promises: there is not a duty that is required of a Christian, but it is converted into a promise. Is not faith a duty? in 1 John iii. 23. 'This is his commandment, that ye should believe.' And is not that turned over into a promise? in Jer. iii. 19. 'Thou shalt call me, my Father;' the word importeth not only an act of necessity, but of violence, 'thou shalt do it.' And in the xiii. of Zech. at theclose, 'thou shaltcall me, thy Father,' and so in Ezek. xi. 19. Is not mortification a Christian's duty? Col. iii. 'Mortify therefore your members.' And it is turned over into a promise, Jer. xxxii. 28. and Ezek. xxxvi. 20. where he promiseth, that he will purge away all their uncleanness.' And it is most clear from Micah vii. 16. 'I will subdue (saith he) all thine iniquities.' It is not said 'thou must subdue them;' but, 'I will do it.' Is not the knowledge of God a commanded duty? And yet it is turned over into a promise in the covenant of grace, 'they shall know me from the highest unto the lowest, neither shall there be need any more that one should say, know the Lord, for they shall be taught of me.' Is not the commandment of fear your duty? as is clear from Eccles. xii. 13. And yet that is likewise turned over into a promise, 'I will put my fear in their inward part, that they shall not depart away from me.' So tenderness is a Christian's duty, and yet it is turned over into a promise, 'I will take away their heart of stone, and give them an heart of flesh.' And that I may say no more of this, look but unto these four places, and there ye will see almost all duties turned over into promises, there is Jer. xxxi. Jer. xxxii. Ezek. xi. and Ezek. xxxvi. Ye will see all the duties of the covenant converted into promises. But may not some say, what advantage is there of this? Much certainly every way, that duties are turned over into promises. It may give a Christian hope, that once he will perform those duties. Will ye not once be tender? Yes, certainly, because your tenderness lieth within a promise. Will ye not be once much in the ex-

ercise of fear? No doubt ye will, and the ground of it is this, because our fear lieth within a promise, and so of the rest. And 2. There is this advantage of it, that all the duties required of a Christian are turned over into promises; because by this means a Christian may go to God, when he cannot perform such a duty, and desire him to fulfil his word, and accomplish his promise; and so may make use, not only of the omnipotency of God, but of the faithfulness of God also. There is this *third* consideration that we would propose, that there are some things of a Christian within a promise, that he doth not believe to be within it, especially these three; 1. The challenges of a Christian are within a promise, when ye are convinced, that is the accomplishment of a promise; this is clear from Isa. xxx. 21. where convictions and challenges are turned over into a promise; 'when thou art turning unto the right hand, or to the left, thine ear shall hear a voice behind thee, crying, this is the way, walk ye in it.' And it may be clear, that our convictions are the accomplishment of promises, because it is the work of the Comforter, as well as to convince, John xvi. 9, as it is for him to make one to rejoice. And if a Christian could believe that his challenges were the accomplishment of a promise, he might embrace challenges, he might see the faithfulness of God in his challenges, and he might see much love in his challenges. 2. A Christian's cross is within a promise; so that when a Christian meets with such afflictions, he may sit down and cry out, that is the accomplishment of a promise; and this is clear from Psalm lxxxix 31. 32. where, in the midst of the promises of the covenant of grace, that promise, of visiting their iniquities with rods, is put in the bosom of them; and from Psalm cxix. 75. 'In faithfulness hast thou afflicted me.' Why doth David say, *in faithfulness*? It was this, because this cross was the accomplishment of a promise; and it may be clear also from that word, Heb. xii. 7. 'Forget not the exhortation, (speaking of the cross) the word is, 'forget not the consolation that speaketh unto you.' As if the Holy Ghost did say, crosses do yield much consolation, as in verse 11. 'They yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.' And if this were believed, that our crosses were the accomplishment of the promises, it would help a Christian unto much humble submission, and there would not be much murmuring under them if once we did believe that they were the accomplishment of a promise. Yea, there is this advantage further, that if we did believe that our crosses were the accomplishment of a promise, we would be much in advancing holiness under our crosses. There is nothing that obstructeth the sweet fruit of righteousness under a cross so much, as impatience. And I would say this to commend the cross, a Christian

never moveth so swiftly to heaven, as when he is under a sanctified cross. A cross, when it is sanctified, will prove a Christian's motion to heaven, more than the enjoyment. For our enjoyments ordinarily do retard our way, as much as further it. And there is this, *3dly*, that is within the promise, 'even our daily food, and the hairs of our head.' The hairs of a Christian's head are all numbered, and within the covenant: so that ye may see what a high respect Christ hath put upon Christians: this is clear from that word, Psalm cxi. 5, 8. 'He hath given meat unto them that fear him. He will ever be mindful of his covenant.'

Our *fourth* consideration shall be, to point out a little those grounds upon which Christ doth delay his accomplishment of the promises. It is certain, that Christians are oftentime put to this, 'doth his promise fail for evermore?' And cry out, 'why art thou become unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?' And the grounds of this delay are these; Christ knoweth that a Christian can often better improve the delay of the accomplishment of the promise, than he can improve the accomplishment itself. We might find this in our experience, it being, for the most part, easier for a Christian to bear his crosses, than to bear his enjoyments. I think David had never so sweet a time, as when he was pursued as a partridge by his son Absalom; then grace did breathe forth most sweetly in his actions; but let David be under prosperity, and then we see he falleth into the sin of adultery. And therefore never repine when ye are under a cross; for certainly, if we had spiritual understanding, we would not judge it so great a hazard to be under a cross, as under prosperity, since we have greater strength to bear the one, than to endure the other. 2. The slothfulness of a Christian, to whom the promises are made, this makes the promises to be delayed in their performance; as was clear in the people of Israel, they were forty years in the wilderness before the promise of entering into Canaan was accomplished. It was a promise that could have been accomplished in a few days, and yet, because of their sin, it was not accomplished for forty years; as ye may see from that word, Numb. xiv. 33, 34. The accomplishment of the promise is delayed, that faith may be more exercised; this is clear from that remarkable word, Psalm cxv. 10. 'Until the time that his word came;' that is, until the word of the Lord was accomplished; 'the word of the Lord tried him;' that is, it was the matter of his exercise, an exercise especially unto faith. For indeed it is much for a Christian to believe upon a word, when it is delayed in its accomplishment. The *fourth* ground of delay is, that the exercise of prayer may be more; and it is certain, that the best improvement of delay is, to be much in prayer. The promises

they occasion prayer; as is clear from Exod. iv. ult. 'They believed, and bowed down their heads and worshipped. And from 2 Sam. vii. 27. where the great promises being made to David, he crieth out, 'Therefore have I found in my heart to pray this prayer unto God.' And it is clear from Psalm cxix. 49. 'Perform thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' It is a bad improvement of delays, when we turn impatient; and it is a bad improvement of delays, when we quit our confidence. Know, that promises are accomplished after delays, and they have a lustre upon them, that may compense for all the delays. 5. There is this other ground of the delays of the accomplishment of the promises, even that the thing which is promised may be sweet unto a Christian when it cometh. This is clear from that word of Solomon, Prov. xiii. 12. 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire doth come, it is as a tree of life. O! but a mercy that cometh unto a Christian through a promise is sweet; yea, a drink of cold water taken up as the accomplishment of a promise, is more sweet 'than a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the less well refined' To take up your bread and your drink as the accomplishment of your promises, would make them refreshful to you. 6. The Lord delays his promises, that a Christian may be more in the exercise of dependence and may be always kept about the throne. A Christian goeth to God from a threefold principle; he goeth to God from a principle of faith, from a principle of necessity, and from a principle of love. But would you know that which putteth a Christian oftenest to God? It is a principle of necessity. And believe it, that if necessity did not drive a Christian unto the foot of the throne, he would seldom go from a principle of love, or from a principle of faith. And there is this *last* ground of the delay of the accomplishment of the promises, that the glory of the wisdom of God may appear, and the glory of his power in the accomplishment of the promise. When the promise is long beneath ground, then the wisdom and power of God doth more appear in the accomplishment of the promise. And from this I would only say to Christians, who are under this exercise, complaining of the want of the performance of the promises, these few things. 1. Believe that the promise shall once be accomplished, that 'though the vision tarry, yet at last it shall speak. 2. Believe that every hour's delay of the accomplishment of the promises hath a sweet design of love; there is not one moment of delay, but it is for the advantage of a Christian; as is clear from that word, Rom. viii. 27. And 3. That promise, which cometh after long delays, hath these three sweet and soul-refreshing attendants; 1. It is performed most seasonably. A Christian, if he

will observe, will see infinite wisdom shining in timing the accomplishing of the promise to such a particular day; a Christian will be constrained to cry of it, if the promise had been fulfilled before, there had not been such art of wisdom appearing in the performance of it. 2. That the promise, when it is accomplished, will engage a Christian more in the exercise of love, than for promises accomplished at a short and smaller time. There is nothing that will so inflame the soul with love, as to have a promise accomplished after delays. And 3. The promises accomplished after delays, have much sense waiting upon the performance thereof. I hardly think a Christian ever met with the accomplishment of a promise after long delay, but his 'soul was made as a watered garden, and as springs of water, whose waters fail not.' This promise falleth, and cometh to a Christian perfumed with love.

Now we shall shut up our discourse at this time, and shall only speak to these six defects of a Christian's faith in believing of the promises. 1. That our faith is impatient, we cannot stay upon the promises if they be delayed. Hence ye will see, that in scripture, patience is often annexed to faith; which speaketh this, that it is impossible for a Christian to believe as he ought, who wanteth the exercise of patience. So Heb. vi. 13. 'Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' And that word in Rev. 'This is the faith and patience of the saints.' 2. Our faith, in closing with the promises is most unconstant. A Christian, when first a promise is borne in upon his spirit, will then believe the promise, and join with it: but after six or seven days go about, he will change his faith; this is remarkably clear from Exod. iv. 31. compared with Exod. vi. 9. When first the promise cometh to the people of Israel, that they shall go out of Egypt, it is said of them in the fourth chapter at the close, 'they believed the promises, and worshipped:' but look to them in Exod. vi. 9. and there ye will see them not believing, because of 'bitterness and anxiety of heart.' And I will tell you the grounds why our faith is unconstant, 1. Sometimes the reading of a promise to a Christian will be as savoury meat: sometimes, when a Christian will read one time in the covenant, it will be perfumed with love, and his soul shall be transported with joy after it; and at another time, when he shall read that promise again, it will be 'tasteless as the white of an egg, and as his sorrowful meat.' 2. That we are not much in studying the exercise of the things that are promised, which certainly would cut short many of our debates. There is this *third* defect of our faith, that we are not diligent. A diligent faith we call this, that after a Christian hath believed, he would be much in the exercise

of prayer, for the accomplishment of the promise; he would be much in the exercise of meditation, to make that promise sweet and lively unto him. And a *fourth* defect is this, we build our faith more upon dispensations, than upon the word: when dispensations say that which the promise saith, then we will believe; but when dispensations speak the contrary language unto the promise, then we will reject our confidence and hope. I will tell you great mysteries of believing. It is hard for a Christian to believe when the commentary seemeth to destroy the text; that is, when the commentary seemeth to declare that the promise shall never be accomplished. In some it is this, it is hard to believe, when dispensations will say, the word of the Lord will fail, and when promises bids you believe. 2. It is hard for a Christian to take impossibilities in the one hand, and the word of promise in the other, and say, O precious Christ, reconcile these two together, that impossibilities do not destroy the promise, but that the promise may be accomplished notwithstanding of this. 5. We have these defects of faith amongst us, that we build our faith more upon sense than upon the word of promise. When a Christian is in a good frame, he will believe; but when Christ hideth his face, he will then give up his hope. And, *lastly*, There is this, that our faith upon the promises is general: we believe the truth of the promises, but we study not to make a particular application of them. I shall not stand long to make any use of what we have spoken, only I would have the Christians of this age, and those that are here, to go home with this conviction, the damnable neglect of believing the promises. A Christian neglecteth these three duties of religion most, the duty of self-examining, the duty of believing the promises, and that noble soul-exalting duty of meditation; these three duties a Christian doth so constantly neglect, that he is almost above the reach of conviction that he doth neglect them. But I would say a word unto those who are destitute of the faith of the promises, and are strangers unto those blessed things that are recorded in the covenant: and it is this, doubtless ye must believe your senses, if ye will not believe his word. It is a question indeed, which of all the senses shall be most satisfied in heaven, whether that of seeing, 'when we shall behold the King in his beauty, and see him as he is?' Or that of hearing, when he shall hear those melodious halleiujahs of that innumerable company, which are about the throne, without any jarring amongst them all? Or that of smelling, when we shall find the sweet perfume of his garments, which are perfumed 'with all the powders of the merchant? Or that of touching, when we find Mary's inhibition taken off, 'touch me not,' and be admitted to embrace him, who now is 'ascended to the Fa-

ther?' Or that of tasting, when we shall drink of those 'rivers of consolation that shall never run dry?' This, I say, is indeed a question: and give me leave to tell you, O atheists, enemies of God! it is also a question, which of all the five senses of a reprobate shall be most tormented in hell, and what would ye answer to it now? Whether think ye the sense of sight, when ye shall behold the darkness of wrath, the devil and his angels, and your fellow-prisoners in that dungeon? Or whether shall your sense of hearing be most tormented in hell, when ye shall hear those screekings and howlings that shall eternally ascend up before God, from the souls that are in prison? Oh! but the greatest enemy would have compassion on his enemy to hear their cries. Or whether will ye say the sense of tasting shall be most tormented, when ye shall drink of those 'rivers of brimstone?' Or will the sense of touching, when ye shall be eternally scorched with those flames of eternal indignation? Or the sense of smelling, when they shall eternally be, as it were, suffocated with the smoke of that sulphureous furnace that shall never be quenched? O think you, if Cain would come from hell and preach that doctrine that we should not persecute the saints, would we listen unto him? If Absalom should come from hell, and should preach against the evil of ambition, would we listen unto him? And if Ahithophel should rise from the dead, and preach that doctrine unto you, 'let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,' would ye stop your ears? Or if Judas would come from hell, and preach to you the evil of hypocrisy, in betraying the Son of man with a kiss, would you believe him? Or if Dives, that is recorded in the gospel, should come from hell, and choose that text to preach upon, James v. 1. 'Go to ye rich men and howl, and weep for your miseries that shall come upon you?' And if Demas would come and second him with that word, 'love not the world, nor the things that are in the world? I fear ye would cry out, 'we will embrace that doctrine at another time.' We desire not to insist much upon these. But O! to believe that there is an eternity of pain, and that there is an eternity of joy. I will give you a description of the atheist, and let him think upon it, it is easier to convince hundreds of you that ye want the fear of God, than that ye want the faith and love of God. Oh! an imaginary faith, and a conceit of love! will ye never quit these two idols? I confess, once ye shall have a faith that no man shall ever rob you of; and that is, the faith of that truth, that when once ye enter into eternity of pain, there is no redemption out of that place. Awake, awake, for behold the Judge cometh, and he shall render vengeance unto those that know him not. To his blessed and precious name, we desire to give praise.

SERMON II.

2 PETER i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

THOUGH justice and judgment be the habitation of his throne, yet mercy and truth did go before it, as two divine ushers to convey us home unto God. There are two things that we would have Christians principally to study. 1. That ye would be much in the study of those wrongs and injuries that ye have done to Christ. And 2. That ye would be much in the study of those infinite acts of precious condescendency that Christ hath manifested towards you, that the one may provoke you unto sorrow and humility, and the other may provoke you unto a sweet astonishment and admiration. And I would ask you this, if Christ should present that challenge unto you, which Absalom presented unto Húshai, 'is this thy kindness unto thy friend? O beloved! what could you answer, when you were thus reproved? I think, if Christ has not forgetfulness for that blessed end, to forget the wrongs and injuries of his own, I know not unto what use Christ should have forgetfulness; for he knoweth not what it is to forget our good works; but he hath a blessed art of forgetting our wrongs; though we may say, on the contrary, that we have a cursed art of forgetting them ourselves. There are these three things that a Christian doth forget. 1. They much forget Christ, that he is the great Author of the promises; so that he may charge them with this, 'why have ye forgotten me?' 2. They forget their mercies, and those divine receipts of love that Christ hath given unto them. 3. They forget even their iniquity; yea, sometimes they forget them before Christ doth forget them, and pass an act of pardon upon them. I shall not stand long to plead with you for undervaluing of that blessed and noble Plant of Renown? I think, if there were no more to evidence that low esteem which we have of Christ, but only this, that we are so much in slighting the promises, it were more than sufficient: but besides, is there not this to testify, how much you undervalue that holy and just one:' that ye study more to have an outward conformity to him, than an inward? We may call the Christians of the time Naphtali, they are 'as a hind let loose,' and they give goodly words, but they do not give Christ goodly practices. And there is this also, that testifieth our undervaluing of Christ, that we slight so much secret and retired correspon-

dence and communion with him. I suppose there are some here, whose consciences beareth them record, that they do not exercise themselves unto godliness. And I shall only say that word, which Gideon spoke in another case, 'if God be with us, how then is all this come upon us? Such a spirit of formality, such a spirit of laziness, such a spirit of hardness, and such a spirit of undervaluing of Christ? I suppose, that if there was a chronicle written of all the lives of the saints who have been since Adam's days, and the Christians of this time were to read over that chronicle, when they had read the life of Adam, they might put this to the close of it, 'my life is not like his;' and when they had read the life of Abel, they might put this to the close of it, 'my life is not like his;' and when they had read the life of Enoch, they might put this to the close of it, 'my life is not his.' Oh! to which of the saints can we go? And if we should call, is there any that would answer you, 'thy life is like mine?'

But to come to the words; we told you, at the last occasion that we spake upon them, that there were these things concerning the promises held forth in them. 1. The rise of the promises is held forth in these words, *whereby;* or, as we cleared, the word may be thus rendered, *by whom*, which relateth unto Jesus Christ.

The *Second* thing, concerning the promises held forth in the verse is, the property of the promises, and they are these four; 1. That the promises are free, held forth in the words, 'whereby are given unto us;' all the promises of the everlasting covenant are free, and not debt. There is that *second* property of the promises, that they are unchangeable, held forth in the word, *given:* the gifts and calling of God 'being without repentance.' And the *third* property of the promises was, that they were exceeding *great.* And the *fourth* property of the promises are, that they are exceeding *precious.*

The *third* thing concerning the promises, held forth in the words is, the advantage that floweth to a Christian by the promises, 'that by them they might be made partakers of the divine nature.'

And the *last* thing concerning them was, the time when the promises were especially accomplished, it was when 'we had escaped the pollution of the world through lust.'

Now as for the *First* thing, viz. the fountain, original, and rise of the promises, which is Jesus Christ, *by whom.* In speaking unto this, we shall speak a little unto these two. 2. In what respects Christ may be said to be the fountain and original of the promises. And we conceive he may be said to be so; 1*st*, Because

he purchased the promises unto us by his own precious blood. There is not a promise in all the everlasting covenant, but it is the price of the blood of the Son of God. This is clear in Eph. ii. 12, 15. where speaking of the Gentiles, that they were strangers unto the covenants of promise, he setteth down, in the 13th verse, the way by which they were brought near unto the covenant, and had a right unto it, it was 'through the blood of his cross:' and it is clear in Eph. iii. 6. that the promises of the gospel 'were given unto us in him;' that is, through the purchase of him, and his merits. And 1 Pet i. 19. where we are said 'to be bought by his blood,' or the promise of redemption was the price of blood. 2dly, Christ may be said to be the fountain of the promises in this respect, that he is the person unto whom the promises of the covenant were first made, and through him are made over unto us: this is clear in Gal. iii. 16. 'The promises were given unto Abraham; not unto many seeds, but as unto one; that is, Christ: and it is clear from 2 Tim. i. 9. where the promises of grace and salvation are said 'to be given unto us in him before the world was made.' It is true, that the promises are not given to Christ considered only as the Son of God (for he had no other relation to us than the Father, or the Holy Ghost), but yet they are first made to him as the Mediator and 'head of the church, and as that blessed days-man, 'King of saints,' and the great Lord keeper of all the rights of the young heirs of glory; 'and we all receive of his fulness, and grace for grace. *3dly*, There is this respect in which Christ may be said to be the fountain of the promises, that it is by him we have a right unto all of them. This is clear, 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13. where these two are conjoined, 'ye are Christ's; and then, 'all things are yours.' If once a soul close with Christ in the covenant of promise, there is not one promise in scripture but he may write this superscription above it, 'this is mine, this is mine. *4thly*, Christ may be said to be the fountain of the promises, in regard that he is the person who applieth the promises, and maketh us to rest upon them, and to believe them. This David did acknowledge, Psalm cxix. 46. 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' As if David had said, 'I had never believed a promise, except thou hadst caused me. And it is clear, Eph. ii. 8. where faith is called 'the gift of God:' even faith to believe the promises is the royal donation and gift of Christ. *5thly*, He may be said to be the fountain of the promises, in that he qualifieth us for the accomplishment of them. Christ giveth us strength to obey the condition that is annexed to the promises; and Christ infuseth habitual grace in us, by which we may be helped to exercise faith upon them; so that, grant all the scrip-

ture were promises, yet if Christ doth not help us, we would never believe them, and there would never a promise be accomplished unto us. 6*thly*, The *last* respect, in which Christ may be said to be the fountain of the promises, is that all the promises of the everlasting covenant have their accomplishment through him; according to that word, 2 Cor. i. 20. 'All the promises of God are in him, yea, and in him, Amen.' So that ye are to bless Christ, not only for the giving of the promises, but for the accomplishment of them also.

That which, *Secondly*, we shall speak to from this, that Christ is the fountain of the promises, shall be to press upon Christians these three excellent and soul-concerning duties. The *first* duty is, that they would not have a light account of the promises, since they are the rivulets and streams that flow from that blessed ocean. O! but if a Christian did believe, that the promise which he hath for his daily bread was bought with the blood of the second Person of the blessed Trinity, would he not have an high account of that promise? And let me tell you, it is impossible for the promises to be in an high account with you, till once ye reduce them unto their rise, and to their fountain. But once know, that all the promises are sweet streams of love, that have run through the heart of precious Christ, and from whence they have flowed unto you; and then, when this is believed, how shall ye sit down and comfort yourselves in the promises, and rejoice exceedingly in them.

The *second* duty which we shall press upon you from this is, that since Christ is the fountain and original of the promises, be much in the application of them. And here I shall speak a little upon these three things. 1. A little unto the evidences and marks of those who have a right to apply the promises, and shall only name unto you these few. The *First* is, to be a person under convictions of sensible need and necessity of such a promise; have ye convictions of such a necessity? Then from that ye may infer, I have a right to the promises; and are not these glad tidings? I know there are some who are under such convictions of their sins, that they think it boldness to apply the promises. But I would say this unto you, that if ye were under sensible convictions of your lost estate, ye would give a world for an hair of a promise whereby to hang. Believe it, the exercise of misbelief is never at its height, till ye would be content to dig through the earth to get a promise; and till we were at that, that our souls would pursue after them from the one end of the world to the other. And for the ground of this assertion, that sensible necessity giveth a right to the promises; if ye will look to those great promises of the everlasting covenant, are they not

given to that Christian who is under a need? Isa. lv. 13. and Matth. xi. 28. where the great promises of the gospel are given out, and the invitation of Jesus Christ is unto those who 'are weary and heavy laden.' Christ would account it an excellent courtesy, that ye should not dispute, but believe; and that ye would look upon your necessities, as his call to believe the promises. 2. A person, who hath an high account of the promises, hath a right to apply them. Let once your soul close with Christ by faith and love, and then you may with boldness close with the promises. I confess, if you were more in believing the promises, ye would have a higher and more full esteem of them. Would you know the reason why Christ is not accounted matchless? It is because of this, our necessities of the promises are not always within our sight, and our exercising of faith upon them is not our daily work. 3. This looketh like a right to the promises, that which is borne in upon a Christian's spirit, when he is near God in prayer, and is under some sensible exercise of his own infirmity, he hath readily a right to apply the promises: as, for instance, when a Christian is debarring himself out of Christ, which is but an unpleasant exercise to meet with a promise borne in upon their spirit, that giveth them some ground of hope, that they may apply and rest upon Christ; or when a Christian is fainting under affliction, and is like to give over to meet with a word of promise borne in upon his spirit, that doth uphold him in the day of his trial, he may probably conclude he hath a right to believe that promise. 4. There is this evidence, persons who have an high account of the promises, have a right to apply them; it is an excellent and most concerning work for a Christian to believe the excellency of the promises, when he cannot have the actual application of them; for when once a Christian cometh to this, that the great things of the everlasting covenant are matchless in his eyes, then that is the valley of Achor, and a door of hope, that ere long Christ will apply them. 5. When a Christian hath great delight in the promises, when they are sweet to his taste, and are the refreshing and rejoicing of his heart, that is an undeniable sign that he hath a right to make use of such promises. Were your souls never refreshed by reading of the boundless covenant of love, and the sweet promises that are in it? I would have Christians to mark those promises that have upheld them in their straits: I would have them to mark the promises that have been lively to their souls, and say, this once was my goodly meat, and made me to rejoice in the 'house of my affliction.' And I would have a Christian to mark the time of the accomplishment of the promises, in which he will see infinite wisdom shining, in ordering the accomplishment of them

at such a time. And I would have a Christian to mark the frame of his own spirit when the promises are accomplished (as ye will often find in scripture), and by all this, you will often find such a reviving and profitable delight in the promises, as shall give a very full evidence of your right unto them. 6. *Lastly*, When a Christian under straits can receive consolation from no other thing, but all prove physicians of no value, and miserable comforters. When a Christian is convinced, that there is no joy to be had under such a cross but in the faith of the promises, that is an evidence that this person hath a right to the promises. I would only say, O beloved in the Lord! is not this your guilt, your undervaluing of the promises, and your little exercise of faith? I would pose you with this, When last studied ye to apply any promise of the covenant of grace? When last did ye exercise faith upon any of them? Shall I tell you, what is the practice of the most part of us? We study perhaps to apply one promise, but for the rest of the promises we lay them aside and do totally neglect them. We study to apply the promises of salvation, and of having redemption through Christ, but for the promises of sanctification, for the promises to help us to perform duties, for the promises to support us under the cross, for the promises to comfort us in our way to heaven, for promises in reference to all ordinary things, we are not much in application to these. O! but if a Christian were believing the promises, he might sit down, even while he is here, and sing one of the songs of Zion, though yet 'but in a strange land.'

The *second* thing that I shall speak unto upon the application of the promises, shall be to propose unto you some rules, that you would make use of in the application of them, and I shall name unto you these.

First, Study these four things, one is the faithfulness and truth of the promises, that such a thing is the saying of him who is the 'faithful witness, and Amen.' This was the practice of Paul, 1 Tim. i. 10. The way how he was brought to make application of the promises was, 1. By laying down that conclusion, 'this is a faithful saying.' Rev. xxi. from the beginning to the 6 verse, where there are great promises made, and much spoken to the commendation of heaven, this is subjoined to the 6 verse, 'These are faithful and true sayings of God.' As if John had said, all that I have spoken concerning heaven will be to no purpose, except ye believe the truth of the promises. And this was the practice of David, 2 Sam. vi. 28. 'Thy words are true, O Lord:' he subjoineth this unto the actual application of the promises. 2. Study the sweetness and excellency of the promises. This was the practice of Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15. 'This is a faithful saying;' and

then he subjoineth, 'and worthy of all acceptation.' And this was the practice of David, Psalm cxix. 72. 'I have esteemed the law of thy mouth better than thousands of gold and silver.' O such an opinion, to esteem the promises higher than thousands of gold! It is heterodox against the most part of you, that prefer the world before the promises of the covenant. And it was his practice, verse 103, and 162. 'I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.' He had a higher account of the promises, than to divide the spoil after war. 3. Let the Christian study the necessity that he hath of the promises, that there is no way of winning above that necessity, but by closing with the promise, and laying hold upon it. 4. *Lastly*, A Christian should study the suitableness that is in the promises, to answer their necessities, that if they be under need, there is a precious way of remedy manifested unto them by these.

The *second* rule that we would prescribe in the application of the promises is, that ye do not expect sensible comforts immediately after ye have believed them. A Christian may apply the promises, and yet want the joy and sweetness that is in them; this is clear, Psalm cxix. 85. 'My soul cleaveth unto the dust.' There he is under much anxiety, and much sorrow; and yet he is a believer of the promises in the mean time, as the words following do clear, 'quicken me according to thy word;' he layeth claim to the promise; and this is clear in the 81 verse of that Psalm. 'My soul doth faint within me;' there is much exercise of sorrow, and yet he is a believer of the promise; 'but I hope in thy word.' A Christian, after he hath believed the promise, would put a blank in Christ's hand concerning the sweetness of the promise, to be made out in its own time. What is sense? It is the precious indulgence of Christ, that he giveth to his own. I would press this upon you, prophesy nothing before your believing of the promise; but having believed, ye may surely prophesy, that the promise shall be accomplished in its own time, and the word that he hath spoken, shall certainly come to pass. But as for sense, as for quickening, as for comforting, as for receiving, ye must put a blank in the hand of Christ, to dispense these things to you as he seeth fit.

The *third* rule in the application of the promise is, that ye do not build your faith upon this, that the promises shall be accomplished, because probability and reason seem to say the thing. I would say this to a Christian, that ye may oftentimes suspect the promise not near to be accomplished, when reason saith, behold the word of the Lord cometh; and that oftentimes the Lord is nearer, when we begin to pass a conclusion, the word is not at hand, and the time of the accomplishment of the pro-

mises is not near. Certainly, many times before Christ accomplish the promises, he will learn us to be living above sense and reason; and he will have reason to submit to faith, he will have probabilities to contradict the accomplishment of the promises, and when probabilities are furthest away, that is his time to work; this is clear in these two signal deliverances of the people of Israel from Egypt and Babylon, Exod. iii. 4, 5. and Ezek. xxxvii. at the beginning. And therefore, as a Christian would not quit his hold of the promises, because dispensations seem to contradict the accomplishment of the promise, and sometimes crieth out, 'why art thou become unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?' So, on the other hand, ye are to build your faith upon the promises, and not upon dispensations, even when favourable, seeing that we know the way that Christ taketh many times to accomplish the promises is by contrary means to our apprehension, 'his paths are in the whirlwind, and his footsteps are not known.' And may we not cry out, 'who can take up the way of God, whose ways are more subtile than the way of an eagle in the air, or the way of a serpent upon a rock, or the way of a ship upon the sea?' &c.

The *fourth* rule that we would prescribe unto you in the application of the promise is, that ye would close absolutely with the promises; I mean, without limiting the holy One. There is limited closing with the promise, which is the frequent exercise of our hearts; we will close with the promise, but with this restraint laid upon Christ, that whensoever we begin to believe the promises, all things might go as we desire; and this is the great occasion that we do so frequently reject our confidence, and do refuse our hope, when God doth not answer our peremptory expectations.

5. We give you this rule, that ye would eye Christ much in the application of the promises. There is a threefold sight of Christ that a Christian should have when he applieth the promises: 1. A Christian should have a sight of the boundless and condescending love of Christ, that so he may be constrained to hope, and may be constrained to love. 2. A Christian should eye the faithfulness and unchangeableness of Christ, that what his blessed lips have spoken, 'he will also do, and what he hath said, he will likewise bring to pass.' And 3. In the application of the promises, he must eye the omnipotency of Christ, that what he hath said he is able to bring to pass. And O! when shall we have occasion to sing that song, 'What hath God wrought for us?' Which was the song that Balaam sung, who yet was but a profane wretch.

6. There is this rule that we would prescribe unto you in the

application of the promises, that a Christian, after he hath applied them, would be much in the exercise of prayer for the accomplishment of these promises. This was the practice of David, 2 Sam. ii. 27. when God is passing many precious promises, David doth subjoin that word, 'Therefore have I found in my heart to pray this prayer. And we see in Ezek. xxxvi. 37. along that chapter, God is passing most excellent promises: and yet in verse 27. this is subjoined, 'For all those things, I will be inquired of by the house of Israel.' And in Jer. xxix. 10. 12. where the time is coming, when God would accomplish 'his good word,' (as he speaketh) that is subjoined in verse 12. 'Then shall ye call upon me, and seek after me.' And Dan. ix. 2, 3. when Daniel knew that the promise was near the time of its accomplishment, then 'he set himself to prayer and supplication, to seek the face of God.' I would say these three words to a Christian; 1. The smallest mercy that a Christian meeteth with, if he can call it Samuel; that is, 'the son of prayer,' and if he can call it Isaac; that is, 'the child of promise;' he may then, and doth ordinarily receive much consolation in that mercy. O! but a mercy flowing to a Christian through a promise, if it were but a drink of cold water, and a piece of brown bread, it will be more excellent cheer than all the dainties of the kings of the earth. O! but to eat and drink, taking these things as the accomplishment of the promises, this would make us eat our bread 'with singleness of heart, and much cheerfulness.' And there is this, *2dly*, I would say unto you, when a promise is accomplished, and a Christian is not much in the exercise of prayer, in the accomplishment of it, one to a hundred if he lose not the sanctified use of the accomplishment of that promise. Ah! know ye not, that a promise, when it is accomplished, may be a curse to a Christian? That word is most terrible, Mal. ii. 2. 'I will curse your blessings.' And the last word that I would say to this is, that a Christian, who believeth the promise, notwithstanding that dispensations seem to contradict it, that promise shall be made most refreshful unto his spirit when it is accomplished. O! but a Christian that never had much jealousy, nor much staggering about the accomplishment of the promise, when it cometh, it will be most refreshful unto him. And believe it, there is not an hour's entertainment, of jealousy about the accomplishment of the promise, but it will impair the sweetness of the promise, when it is accomplished, except so far that the transcendent and free love of Christ is seen in the accomplishment of them, notwithstanding of our misbelief.

The *last* rule that I shall offer a Christian in his application of the promises is, when ye meet with objections that ye cannot

answer, but they do silence you; I will tell you what ye should do with them, misken these obstructions, and lay them by. This was the practice of believing Abraham, Rom. iv. 9. 'He considered not his own body, being weak, and the deadness of Sarah's womb.' The weakness of his own body, and the deadness of Sarah's womb, were so strong objections in the way of the accomplishment of the promises, that he could not answer them; and the way he took to refute them was, 'he did not consider them;' he forgot, as it were, those objections, and went about his duty.

The *third* thing that we shall speak to in relation to the application of the promises, shall be somewhat for helping a Christian who is standing at too great a distance to get the promises applied.

First, A Christian should be much in the study of those experiences of the faithfulness of God, and what others hath met with. When ye begin to apply a promise, ye may be helped in the faith of applying them, by beholding those great records of the faithfulness of God that are extant. This was the way the angel took with Mary, Luke i. 36. where, helping her to believe that promise, 'that of her should be born the Messiah:' this is the way that he strengthened her, 'thy cousin Elizabeth is now with child, and hath gone six months, even she that was called barren.' And I shall only name these two places in scripture, which may help you exceedingly, and strengthen you to believe the promises upon this account, 1. There is that word in Exod. xii. 41. and 51. It is a most remarkable saying, 'At the end of four hundred and thirty years, on that very same day,' (there was not one day missed after the time that was set, but accomplished) 'in that very same day they came out.' And this is marked in verse 51. again. And 2. There is that word, 1 Kings viii. 56, where Solomon, when he is singing most sweetly to God, taketh observation of this, 'Lo, (saith he) there hath not failed one word that God hath spoken to you by his servant Moses.'

Secondly, Ye should be much in the consideration of your own experiences that you have in the accomplishment of the promises formerly. This was the way that David took to strengthen himself to believe the promises, "he that hath delivered me from the rage of the lion, and the paw of the bear, he will deliver me from this uncircumcised Philistine," 1 Sam. xvii. 35. and 37. 46. And this was the practice of the apostle Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18. 'God hath delivered me from the cruel lion:' and from thence he subjoineth, 'and the Lord will deliver me from every evil work.' And this was his practice, 2 Cor. i. 10. where these three are sweetly knit together, "God hath delivered me, he doth deliver

me, and he shall deliver me.' There is one experience of this kind that preacheth this unto you, O believe the promises, and do not call in question his faithfulness.

Thirdly, There is this help, that ye study much the excellency of the promises, which is the most noble and excellent way to move you to apply the promises, according to that word, Psalm cxix. 111. 'I have made thy testimonies my heritage for ever;' and the ground often is this, 'because they are the rejoicing of my heart.' The sweetness of the promises should engage our hearts to apply them. And there is this *fourth* help, a Christian should study the omnipotency of God, that he may be helped to believe and apply the promises. This is clear in Zech. xii. 1. where God, going to many excellent promises, ushers in that discourse with high and majestic descriptions of his power, that he 'stretcheth forth the heaven, and layeth the foundations of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.' And this was the practice of Abraham, Rom. iv. 21. the way how he came to believe the promise, 'he counteth him able that made it,' that he might perform it. *5thly*, For your help in applying of the promises, study much the unchangeableness of Christ, and his faithfulness, know that he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. This was the way that Sarah came to the faith of the promises, Heb. xi. 11. 'She believed:' and the ground of it is, that she judged him faithful that had promised.' There is not an act of misbelief that a Christian falleth into, but it saith, that God is not faithful, and that he is not true.

Now the last duty which we would press from this point, that Christ is the fountain of the promises, is, that we may have an high esteem of the promises, even of 'Jesus Christ, in whom they are yea, and Amen.' And I shall close at this time with this, Are there not many here that have no respect unto him, who is that 'faithfulness, and the Amen;' who hath promised 'us himself and all things?' And if ye will not take with the challenge, let your hearts but answer these two or three things, 1. Hath not the loss of things in the world affected your hearts more than ever absence from Christ did? hath it not? And can such a soul say, I have an high account of the Promiser? Is it possible, that those who will mourn more under the absence of their idols, than for the want of Jesus Christ, that they can have an high account of him? I am persuaded of this, there are some merchants that the loss of their goods at sea hath diverted them from their night's rest, and yet absence from Christ never diverted them from their sleep one hour. O when did love to find out Jesus Christ, and to enjoy his fellowship, make you rise up in the silent watches of the night, and to pursue after him? 2. Have not your

souls delighted more in the enjoyment of the things of this world than ever they did in the enjoyment of Christ? Is not this true, that the increase of wine and oil, and of silver and gold, hath affected your hearts more with joy, than ever Christ did? And have you an high esteem of the Promiser? 3. Are you taking delight to entertain fellowship and communion with the Promiser? Is this true? When went you to your prayers, but ye wearied ere ye went away? And have you an high esteem of the Promiser? Is not this the language of your hearts, 'O when shall the sabbath be over? And when shall the new moon be gone, that I may pursue after my idols?' I would pose you with this, if there were no eye to take notice of you, would you not slight secret prayer? Would you not slight family prayer? We love not to serve Jesus Christ. I know there are atheists here, who would love to go to heaven without faith, love, prayer, and repentance; they would love to go to heaven by a way never one went before them. And now I shall say but this one word to you that are the heirs of the promise, and have the blessed expectation of heaven, whatever the world do esteem of him, O remember and comfort yourselves in the thoughts of the blessed day, when Christ (after he hath past the sentence of condemnation upon the wicked) shall go in upon the head of the troops of the first-born, they shall walk before as through the ports of the New Jerusalem, having crowns of immortal glory upon their heads, and then shall follow after him his angels, and then shall follow after him the blessed company of the first-born, every one having the harps of God in their hands, and they shall be singing as they enter in through the ports of the city, 'Hallelujah unto him that was dead, and is alive, and now liveth for evermore.' Oh! to believe that day, when first we shall enter in through the streets of the New Jerusalem, when we shall be clothed in white robes, having crowns upon our heads. O such a day! if it were believed, might make us often shake our glass, and 'stretch out our necks,' (as the word is, Rom. xviii. 19.) till once we saw that blessed day approaching us. There is no wearying in heaven, the promises are now accomplished unto them, and they are inheriting the promises. When shall that word be accomplished, or when shall we have occasion to say it, Mark i. 36. 'Behold, all men seek after thee?' O the word that these disciples spake to Christ? O study to love him? study to believe on him; for be persuaded, he is upon his way: and I shall say no more but this, that all the promises which are within the bonds of this everlasting covenant are *Yea*, and *Amen*, in an embraced Christ, and laid hold on by faith: so, I say, all the curses that are in Deut. xxv. 26, 28. and all the curses that are within the volume of the

book of this covenant, shall be *Yea*, and *Amen*, in a despised Christ, and not be laid hold upon by faith.

SERMON III.

2 PETER i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

SOMETIMES the soul of a Christian doth move in the paths of God, and in the way towards Zion, 'as the chariots of Amminadab,' when they are under the soul-enlivening and quickening influences of heaven; and sometimes the soul of a Christian doth move in these blessed paths, as Pharaoh's chariots, 'they drive most heavily,' when there is a cloud between the precious face of Christ and them. And we conceive, that sound and spiritual exercise of faith upon the promises, would make a Christian's motion more swift towards heaven. We grant that Christ hath three different ways of guiding sons and daughters unto glory: 1. There are some whom Christ carrieth to heaven in a chariot paved with love, who all their life have lived within sight of that promised land, and were taken up with the refreshing of heavenly joys; such an one was Enoch, who spent his days in walking with God. 2. There are some whom Christ guideth to heaven in a chariot drawn with speckled horses; they have mixed dispensations of sorrow and joy attending them in their walk, and they have a winter and a summer; a night and a day; and such an one was Job. 3. There are some whom Christ carrieth to heaven in a fiery chariot, who all their life were under distracting terror of the Most High, and were living perpetually, in their own apprehensions, upon the borders of hell; and such an one was Heman, whom Christ thus guided to heaven. However, if we shall go there, we need not much dispute the way how he came, 'for he doth all things well.' And, upon the other part, Satan hath three different ways of guiding souls unto everlasting torment; there are some Satan carrieth to hell in a chariot of delusion, making them believe they are still going to heaven; and such are the hypocrites in Zion. And I shall say, I think that chariot was never so filled as it is in these days. O fear that dreadful disappointment which many of you (it is like) will meet with? An hypocrite hath strong hopes, strong idols, and strong delusions, these are his three attendants. And there are some whom Satan

carrieth to hell in a chariot of profanity, and ignorance of God, 'whose judgment goeth before hand,' and it is known that they are going there. And there are some that Satan carrieth to hell in a chariot of civility, whose religion stands in this, 'concerning the letter of the law to be blameless.' And certainly believing of the promises, and studying to exercise faith upon them, is that which might prevent many of these damnable self-destroying and murdering delusions that are within some of our breasts. There are three things in scripture that are called precious. Christ is called precious, 1 Pet. ii. 7. Faith is called precious, 2 Pet. i. 1 'To you that are partakers of the like precious faith with us.' And the promises are called precious, in the words that we have read. And faith, as it were, hath two blessed eyes, by one it beholdeth Christ, and by the other it beholdeth the promises, and fixeth itself upon them. O Christians and expectants of heaven! would ye know what is the cause of all the sad things that have befallen you in these days? It is this, in short, ye believe not the promises. O Christian what is the reason that ye carry not your crosses with patience? It is, because ye believe not the promises, by which your souls must be upheld in the day of your affliction. O Christians! what is the cause of your little mortification? Is it not, because ye believe not the promises? For by them ye should 'be made partakers of the divine nature.' O Christians, what is the ground that you pray so little, and that you pray with so little success? Is it not because ye believe not the promises? A Christian, when he goeth to pray, should take these two things along with him: 1. The sensible convictions of his necessities; and, 2. the precious promise that is given to answer that necessity: the one would provoke fervency, and the other faith. Are there not some here, who know not what it is to pray upon a promise, and that maketh you to pray to so little purpose? O Christian, what is the reason of your so much sorrow, and of your so little spiritual comfort? It is, that ye believe not the promises. It is no wonder that your name is called Marah, because ye exercise not faith upon the precious promises of God. I think, without wronging you, or any that are here, I doubt much if ever Christians had such hearts as the most part of us have, O what a heart is it that can neither 'pray nor praise?' Both are like mysteries unto them. What a heart is that, O Christian, that can neither believe promises, believe threatenings, nor obey commands? What a heart is that, that can neither sorrow for sin, nor rejoice in God? And what a heart is that, that neither loves Christ when he is present, nor longs for him when he is absent? And what a heart is that,

O Christians, that can neither love heaven, nor fear hell? and is there not such hearts with us, even with us who are here this day?

At the last occasion we spake upon these words, we spoke a little to the *first* thing in them, which was the rise and the original of the promises, held forth in that word *whereby*, or *by whom*.' The *second* thing in the words was, the properties of the promises; and we told you, that there were these four held forth in the words. The *first* property of the promises is, that they are free, which is imported in that word, *are given*. All the promises of the everlasting covenant, being the precious and free gifts of God. Hence you will see, that oft-times the tenor of the covenant of grace runs upon that strain, *I will give you*; as is clear, Jer. xxxii. 39. 'I will give you one heart;' and Ezek. xxxiv. 26. I will give you a new heart', and Ezek. xi. 1. 19. 'I will give you an heart of flesh.' It is the strain of the language of the covenant of grace, to *give*.

Now in speaking upon this *first* property of the promises, *to wit*, their freedom, I shall speak a little unto these two; the *first* thing shall be to point out unto you the way how a Christian may win to the distinct uptaking of the freedom of the promises, and then I shall from thence press some duties.

And, in short, as to the *first*, we conceive that a Christian may win to the distinct uptaking of the freedom of the promises, by these considerations: 1. Let a Christian cast his eyes upon the sweet rise and spring, or fountain of the promises, and there ye will see their freedom shining most clear: for what is the fountain of the promises? Is it not the boundless and everlasting love of Christ? This is clear, Deut. vii. 8. where God giving a reason of all the great things that he hath performed for them, he setteth down the rise of it, '*because I loved you*, saith he. And again the ground of this is, *because I loved you*. There being no reason of love, but love; and it is clear, 2 Sam. vii. 2. where David, having perceived many precious promises, setteth down the rise of all these in that verse, 'For thy word's sake (saith he), and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these things, to make them known unto thy servant.'

And it is clear, Ezek. xvii. 18. where God calleth the time of entering into covenant with them, *a time of love*. That love was eminently shining in that day, when God condescended to covenant with them. And hence ye see in scripture, that the promises are called by the name of mercy, Micah vii. 20. 'To perform the mercy to Abraham,' which is the promises; and they are so called, because mercy and boundless love is the sole fountain and spring of all these promises. 2*dly*, Consider the per-

sons who have a right to make use of the promises. Must not the promises be free, when the proclamation is upon these terms, Rev. xxi. 12. 'Whosoever will let him come?' There is nothing to give you a right to the promises, but only a willingness to embrace them; if ye will ye may take them. And 3*dly*, Ye may read the freedom of the promises in this, that any condition which is annexed to the promise, Christ giveth to the believer strength to perform that condition. It is known, that faith is the condition of the promises; and it is certain, that Christ giveth a believer that condition, as well as he giveth him the promise. Philip. i. 29. 'To you it is given to believe.' And Eph. ii. 8. 'It is the gift of God.' It is impossible for a Christian to perform the condition, except Christ, who is surety for him, did perform it. 4*thly*, Ye may read the freedom of the promises, if ye consider the time when they are accomplished, it is often at such a time, when the Christian hath been, and is under no very spiritual frame. Hence ye will see in Ezek. xvi. 60, 61. that when the promises are accomplished, God requireth 'confusion and blushing of face, because of their former ways, and Ezek. xxxvi. when the promises are accomplished, then that is the time when the Lord calleth them to 'Remember their own evil ways, and their doings that were not good.' Yea, he will have them and all the world to know, it is not for their sakes that he doth this: therefore he commanded them to be 'ashamed and confounded for their own ways, or the posture they were in when he accomplished his promises. And if there were no other thing to speak the freedom of the promises, but the trusting of the accomplishment of them with such a frame, it were more than sufficient. But besides this, see David's practice, 2 Sam. vii. 8. he readeth the freedom of the promises from his own imperfections, 'What am I,' saith he, 'and what is my father's house, that thou shouldest have brought me hitherto?' And even in the same text, there is an emphasis in that word, *to us*, 'whereby are given to us.' As if the Apostle did say, to prove that the promises are gifts, I can bring no argument so strong as this, *they are given to us.*

Fifthly, Ye may read the freedom of the promises, if ye will consider and take up the infinite fulness and all-sufficiency of the Promiser, that there is nothing without himself that can persuade him to give such promises. Hence you will see, Gen. xvii. 1. when he is making the covenant with Abraham, he putteth it still in the frontispiece of the covenant, 'I am God all-sufficient; as it were to cut off all thoughts of merit that Abraham might have; and that Abraham might be persuaded of this, that there was an imaginable perfection in himself that could be the ground and rise of such promises. And there is that, *lastly*, from which

ye may read the freedom of the promises, if ye consider the greatness of these promises; if they were of a lower nature, then were it less to be wondered, if merit should come in and plead for itself; but when a Christian shall compare himself, and the greatness of the promises together, he cannot but then sing that blessed song, 'These are the gifts and donations of God, and what am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?'

Now the *second* thing that we proposed to speak to is, to press some duties upon you from this, that the promises are free; and we shall lay before you these three; The *first* is, that since the promises of God are free, then as you would not destroy your own souls, be much in making use and application of the promises? Are not the promises your life? Did not all the saints that went to heaven before us, go to heaven living upon the promises? There was not a step of Abraham's life, but he walked with a promise in it; there was not an affliction that Abraham met with, but he took comfort to himself from the promises. And I shall remove these two mistakes that are incident to Christians in the application of the promises, even from these grounds, that they are free.

The *first* is this, There are some Christians that will not apply the promises, because they are under the convictions of their own infirmities, and of their own baseness; so that when we press you to believe them, ye reject this counsel, because ye consult with your own infirmities. This was the practice of David, Psalm xxii. 4. "Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted and were delivered:" but he durst not, in the 6 verse, "But I am a worm, and not a man, I am a reproach among the people." And it is the same divinity that is in these days, when we press you to believe the promises, because of the great cloud of witnesses that hath gone before you, that believe the promises. O! say ye, if I were like David and Abraham, I would believe the promises, but truly David said the same, who lived before you, if I were like my fathers, I would believe the promises, but I am not like my fathers. And therefore I would say to you these two words.

1. Are you inferior or short unto David in holiness, or necessities? We do not question but all of you will answer, we are not inferior to David in necessities, but in holiness; then, say we, if ye be not inferior to David in necessities, but in holiness, then make use of the promises; for as we cleared the last day, necessity giveth a right in making use of the promises.

2. I would say, I am certainly persuaded, that sensible necessity would cut short many of our formal debates in closing with

the promises; necessity (as ye use to speak) hath no law, and necessity hath no manner. Let me say this to you, who will not close with the promises, that if ye were under sensible necessity, if Christ should forbid you to close with such a promise, ye would close with it, though he forbade you, as the woman of Canaan did; there is nothing but sensible necessity will overcome it: necessity never disputes its right, for it goeth over the belly of such a dispute, it presently makes use of that which its need calleth for.

Secondly, There is that other mistake amongst Christians in believing the promises, that they want the qualifications annexed to them, and therefore they dare not believe the promises, especially that promise of closing with Christ, they think they are not under such a deep measure of humiliation, of sorrow for sin, nor under such a lively apprehension of the excellency of Christ. And I shall say but these six things unto those that will not close with Christ, because they want qualifications, or at least have not these qualifications after such a way. *First*, Let me tell thee, O Christian that thus disputes, go between the first step of a Christian's way to heaven, and the last, and see if ye can behold a grave upon which this is written, "Behold, here "lieth a man or woman who came to Christ to embrace him, and "he would not receive them." Did ye ever behold such a grave as this? And why then do ye so much dispute? Will ye take a trial of Christ, whether he will refuse you if ye come? And if he refuse you, sure am I, he will do that which he never did to any before you. The *Second* thing I would say to such is, that the want of such degrees of such things, ought not to be a ground of your not closing with Christ; for if ye had the qualifications that ye require, ye would maintain the same disputes that ye do now: for when we desire you to close with Christ, ye answer, that your sorrow is not come to such a height as it ought, nor is your humiliation come to such a height as you pitch for yourself to come. O Christian! if ye come to ten times more, and yet ten times more, ye would have the same dispute then which ye have now; and the ground of it is this, the more that a Christian hath real sorrow, he will oftentimes be the more in the apprehension that he hath no sorrow. *Thirdly*, If ye want the qualifications that are required in those that should close with Christ in the covenant of promise, then come to Christ to get these qualifications. I would only ask at you, think ye to spin sorrow for sin out of your own hearts? Think ye to spin humiliation for sin out of these wretched breasts of yours? Ye must come to Christ for sorrow, as well as ye must come for life.

Fourthly, All those qualifications that are annexed unto that

promise of closing with Christ and coming to him, point out rather the qualification of them that will come, than the qualification of those who ought to come. Ye read such a command as that, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden.' O, say ye, I am not weary, and I am not under the burden of sin, therefore I cannot come. I will tell you what is the real meaning of that command, Christ inviteth those who have the greatest unwillingness, to come and get willingness: But withal, it sheweth this, none will come to get rest from Christ, but those who are first weary; and this is the Lord's method of working, first to make weary, and then to ease; but no such matter in his word, that first we must have a weariness of our own making, or else he will not receive us. Now, but when ye come, ye will be weary, and he will receive you.

Fifthly, Let me say to you who thus dispute, make your want of qualifications the very ground of your closing with Christ. I shall but in three places let you see this strange arguing of faith in closing with the promises: there is that, Psalm xl. 11, 12. 'Let thy truth continually preserve me;' that is, let thy promises be accomplished, and made lively unto me, which are my preservation. And would ye know the ground and reason that he annexeth unto this: 'For (saith he) innumerable evils compass me about, they have taken such hold of me, that I am not able to look up.' He maketh his very want of qualifications the ground of his closing with the promise, and seeking the accomplishment of it. And there is this second expression, which is most wonderful, Psalm xxv. 11. David prayeth for the accomplishment of that promise, 'pardon my sin,' upon that very same account, 'because it is very great.' And I shall give you a third place, in which the arguing by faith is most mysterious, Exod. xxxiii. compared with Exod. xxxiv. 9. In the first place, God denieth the accomplishment of the promise, 'of going up amongst the people.' And the ground he giveth for it is, 'Because (saith he) ye are a stiff-necked people.' And, chapter xxiv. 9. when Moses is praying for the accomplishment of the promise, 'That God would go amongst them,' he taketh the same argument out of the mouth of God, 'Go up amongst us; for (saith he) we are a stiff-necked people;' God said, 'He would not go up, because they are a stiff-necked people;' and Moses desireth him to go, because of this. And there is this, *lastly*, that we would say unto you who so much dispute, if ye would have those qualifications that ye want, ye would study to close with Christ by faith. Would ye have sorrow for sin? then believe. Would ye have high thoughts of Christ? then believe. Would ye have humiliation? then believe; for believing is a mother-grace unto all these.

The *second* duty that we would press upon you from this consideration, that the promises are free, is, that when the promises are given to you, and are accomplished, ye would study to be denied to any merit in yourselves, which we may suppose to be the rise of the giving or accomplishing of the promises. There is nothing that a Christian receiveth, but it is a fruit of infinite love. There is not a conviction that trysteth a Christian, but it is the fruit of infinite love. There is not one real sigh for sin, but it is the fruit of infinite love. There is not one blink of the precious countenance of Christ, but it is a fruit of infinite love. There is not the least degree of hatred against sin, but it is the fruit of infinite love. There is not the least promise that is accomplished unto you but it is the fruit of infinite love. So that upon your receipts from God, there is reason to sing that song, 'Not unto us, but unto thee doth belong the glory.' And therefore I would press this upon you, O Christian! reduce all your mercies unto the fountain, and there sit down and pen songs of everlasting praise unto him. Will ye but take a view of this, there is not one bit of bread that ye eat that is within a promise, but it is a mercy, that cometh running to you through the bowels and tender heart of Christ: his heart is the fountain of all our mercies, and they sweetly stream out of that precious fountain: so that, if ye had no other thing to commend your mercies from, but that it is a gift of the heart of Christ, ye may take it in your arms upon this account, and solace yourselves with it.

The *last* duty that we would press upon you from this consideration, that the promises are free, is this, ye should be studying to close with Jesus Christ, who is promised, and freely held out to you in the gospel. O sinner of eighty years old! O sinner of sixty years old! O atheist of forty years old! and O sinner of twenty years old and downward! I do here invite you, as the ambassador of Jesus Christ, to embrace Christ, freely offered to you in the promises; yea, I do invite you by all the virtues of that noble Plant of renown, by that everlasting love that dwelleth in his precious heart, by all the sufferings and wounds that he received, by his eternal glory, and by all the blessings and joys of heaven, and by that love which ye owe to your own precious and immortal souls, that ye would come and embrace him freely offered unto you in the gospel. And for the further pressing of this, and for clearing of the way of your closing with him, I shall, *First*, propose some gospel mysteries, and sweetly agreeing contradictions, (if so we may speak) held forth in scripture, 1. 'Come and buy Christ, and yet buy him without money;' that is, come and receive Christ, and ye shall have as unquestionable a

right to him, as if ye had bought him; that is, to 'buy him without money.' Ye have nothing to commend you to Christ but necessities: and necessities bid you go, and Christ biddeth you come, why then will ye sit that call? 2. What a gospel-mystery is that, 'Ye are to buy Christ, and he is above price!' there is nothing that we can give to buy that 'pearl of great price,' and yet we must buy him: then the meaning is, come, and buy Christ by faith, and by forsaking of your idols, this is all the price that he doth require for himself; and so he requireth nothing of you, but what he himself doth give, or what is both your duty and advantage to forsake, and which is no gain for him to receive. Christ is not enriched by your hearts, and by giving of your consent to him. 3. This is a gospel mystery, that we are to buy without money, and without price, and yet to buy with a price! according to that word, Prov. xvii. 17. 'There is a price put in the hand of fools to buy wisdom.' And what is the meaning of that, 'to buy with price, and to buy without price?' It is in short this, though Christ be offered to you in the gospel freely, ye must not sit down, but be active in closing with him. What is the price that Christ requireth of you? It is even this, that ye would forsake your soul-destroying idols, and that ye would forsake your former evil ways, and take hold of the present opportunity for embracing him. And O cursed shall the heart be that will not embrace Christ! O but to have him one hour in our arms, it were well worth ten thousand eternities of the enjoyments of all things that are here below! ye would never open your arms again to another lover, if once ye had him between your breasts. O but a sight of him, who now is the eternal ravishment of all that are above, would transport your hearts with joy, with delight, and admiration above all expression. 4. There is this gospel-mystery, by which we would press you to embrace Christ, a Christian must buy Christ, and yet he must have him freely. Is there not an inconsistency, do you suppose, between buying and having freely? But I would say this to clear it, Christ is both the seller, he is the ware, and he is the buyer. Christ presenteth himself unto your hearts, and he desireth to sell himself, and he persuadeth, and freely enableth you to buy him. I will tell you what Christ doth, he standeth without our hearts, and within our hearts; he standeth without, and knocketh by the word, and he standeth within and openeth by his Spirit. Christ, he both commandeth and he obeyeth, both within doors and without doors, and all this he doth freely.

The *Second* thing I shall say to persuade your heart to take Christ, freely promised and offered unto you, shall be this, will ye consider that there is willingness in the heart of Christ to take

you. I shall give you these seven things that speak out Christ's willingness to receive you. 1*st*, Doth he not command you to come and receive him? And if you could multiply objections throughout eternity, why ye should not close with Christ, ye may cut them all asunder with this knife, 'This is his commandment.' And doth he not command you, Matth. xi. 28. 'Come unto me all ye that labour?' And Isa. lv. 1. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters? 2*dly*. He doth regret and deeply resent it, that they will not come. I think Christ never wept so bitterly, as that day when he wept over Jerusalem, that ye will not embrace him, Luke xix. 42. If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace. And John ix. 40. 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life.' O what think ye can be the rise of this, that Christ should sorrow, because ye will not give up your hearts unto him! Doth he increase his gain when ye give him your hearts? No certainly; but he cannot endure the madness in you, that ye should forsake your only gain. 3*dly*, Would you do Christ a joyful turn, and make his heart glad? Embrace him. This is clear, Luke xv. 5. that when he findeth the sheep that has gone astray, 'he returneth rejoicing. 4*thly*, Would ye make all the persons of the blessed Trinity to rejoice? Would ye make all the angels of heaven to sing? Would ye make all the saints that are round about the throne to exult for joy? Then give your hearts up to Christ, and close with him in the covenant of promise; according to that word, Cant. vi. last verse, 'Return, return, O Shulamite! Return, return, that we may look upon thee.' Four times that command is repeated, *return*: and the great argument with which he backeth it is, that all the persons of the Trinity may rejoice; 'that we may look upon thee.' 5*thly*, Consider how he hath condescended to give himself at a very low rate. What will ye give for Christ? O sinner, what will ye give for him? Would ye give the world for Christ? I will tell you what ye will get Christ for; ye will get him for a very look, Isa. xlv. 22. 'O Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth.' And think ye not that is a matchless mercy, that the thirty-three years sufferings of Christ, all the pains and tortures of his heart, his being under the insupportable wrath of an offended God, the fruit of all that should be yours for a look? Will ye deny that to Christ? O do you ever think to find a more down-coming market? Yea, 6*thly*, Doth not this speak an admirable willingness to have you? He is to give you that look. It is impossible for these cursed eyes of ours ever to give precious Christ a look; and therefore he hath promised to give that to us, that we may give to him, Zech. xiii. 18. 'They shall look

to me.' That very look ye are to get from Christ, and ye see it is within the compass of a promise. *Lastly*, This speaketh Christ's willingness to receive and take you, that he doth not take the first refusal. O Christians that are now in Christ! if Christ had taken a hundred refusals from you, ye should never have been in heaven; but he waiteth for an answer, and doth not take us at our first word; according to that word, Song v. 2. 'I am wet (saith he) with the drops of the morning, and my locks with the dew of the night.' He was long knocking at her heart, and staid a long time there, patiently suffering all the injuries he could meet with. And I would only pose you. Think ye, that if one of the richest of you were suiting a very poor woman, and she refused you so many times, would your proud heart submit to take her; and yet how oftentimes hath the precious heart of Christ submitted to many affronts and refusals from us? I think, if it were possible, Christians should wink when first they behold Christ upon the day of their espousals: For I suppose there will be a great dispute between shame and love, desire and confusion: shame will make you close your eyes, because you have oft-times undervalued that prince; and yet love will not let you close them. Desire will put you to look, though reflecting upon your former ways will make you blush and be ashamed.

Thirdly, To persuade you to receive Christ in the offer of his free promises, I shall but say these three words, and close. 1. Look to those excellent gifts that Christ bringeth with him, he bringeth justification with him, and is not that an excellent gift? He bringeth sanctification with him, and is not that an excellent gift? He bringeth joy of the Holy Ghost with him, and is not that an excellent gift? He bringeth the love of God with him, and is not that an excellent gift? He bringeth patience under sufferings with him, and is not that an excellent gift? But why should I name what he bringeth? he bringeth himself, and all things; and what would you have more. O but for one saving blink of his face! it would make your hearts lay down that enmity which you have maintained so long. 2. O Christian, that ye may close with Christ, do but remember the happiness that ye will have in embracing him. I told you not long since, and now I put you in mind again, that there is a sixfold crown which shall be put upon your head. Would ye have long life? Then come to Christ, and ye shall have a crown of everlasting life. Would ye have glory? Then come to Christ, and ye shall have a crown of glory. Would ye have knowledge of the mysteries of God? Then come to Christ, and he shall crown you with knowledge. Would you have eternal felicity, and an uninterrupted happiness? Then come to Christ, and ye shall have an immortal

crown. Would ye have holiness and sanctification? Then come to Christ, and ye shall have a crown of righteousness; yea, he shall put a royal crown upon your head, a crown of pure gold; and then that word shall be accomplished to the full, Ezek. ix. 16. 'Then shall they be as the stones of a crown lifted up, and as an ensign upon the land.' O what a day think ye it will be, when Christ shall hold your crowns upon his hand, and shall put them upon those heads, never to be removed again? Here we are often put to sigh out that lamentation. 'The crown has fallen from our heads, woe unto us, for we have sinned;' but there shall be no more sin to make our crown to totter. 1. I must tell you, there is a four-fold suit of apparel that ye shall be clothed with ere long; ye are now clothed with *heaviness*, but then ye shall be clothed with the garments of *praises*. And did ye ever know such a robe as that? Is it not a more excellent robe, than the robes of kings and emperors on the earth, to be clothed with *praises*. Many of them are, and shall be for ever clothed with infamy and shame. 2. Ye shall be clothed with change of raiment, and shall be brought unto the king 'in raiment of needle work.' O poor lass, and poor lad, that sitteth upon the dunghill, that knows not what it is to have change of apparel, ye shall have it in that day when Christ shall solemnize the marriage with you, you shall misken yourself. O Christian, if ye knew yourself never so well, you will be forced to cry out, O! is this I? Is this I that am now made perfect through his comeliness? 3. Ye shall be clothed with the garments of 'immortal glory,' ye that have 'your foundation in the dust, and dwell in houses of clay, ye shall then be clothed with these excellent robes of immortality, and clothed upon with your house from heaven.' And *lastly*, Ye shall be clothed with the garments of the spotless righteousness of Christ. O! such a majestic walk as ye will have when ye shall have a sceptre in one hand, and a palm in the other; those robes put upon your back, and those crowns upon your heads, and then shall ye walk through those streets that are paved with gold. 4. I shall give you this word to think upon, that there are five things which shall be your exercise in heaven: 1. Ye shall be constantly taken up in wondering. If it be not presumption for us to think a little, what is the exercise of Christ, and the saints that are above; we conceive it is this, 'Christ is wondering at their beauty, and they are wondering at 'his beauty; Christ is looking upon them, and they upon him." And is it not true, that if Christ be now ravished with one of our eyes, Song iv. 9. much more shall he be ravished when both our eyes shall be given unto him, and shall eternally behold him, without going a whoring after other lovers? 2. Ye shall be con-

tinually in the exercise of praise; joy and delight shall be going out eternally; ye shall then sweetly warble upon harps of God, and shall cry, 'Hallelujah to him that sitteth upon the throne.' There shall be no discord there, there is a sweet and beautiful harmony amongst all those spiritual and heavenly musicians. O! but to hear them, it were a heaven, though we had not the blessed lot to sing with them. 3. Ye shall be continually taken up in the exercise of love; faith is your predominant grace while ye are here, but love shall be your predominant grace when ye are there. O! is it not a mystery to take up those sweet emanations of love and delight that shall pass between Christ and you? Ye shall be infolding Christ, and Christ shall be infolding you. 4. Ye shall be continually beholding him. I think it is hardly possible for the wife to remember her husband in heaven, though she loved him as her own heart: they will all be taken up in beholding him who sitteth upon the throne; they will be thinking it too low an object to be taken up with looking upon one another in these relations; all will be ravished in beholding him, and one another in him, and for him. O the blessed exercise of those who are now entered within that city, and within those gates, whose name is *praise*. 5. Ye shall be continually taken up in beholding, ye shall be always knowing, and yet never able to comprehend the endless mysteries and perfection of Jesus Christ. O such a study, is it not pleasant always to be studying Christ? And will not these things persuade you.

And now but a word more to those who will not have this free offer; if ye will not embrace Christ and take him, let me tell you, I would not be in your stead for ten thousand worlds. If ye will not embrace Christ, and take him for your portion, the stones of the wall of this house will bear witness against you, and they shall have a tongue to speak against you, that ye have been invited to take him, and would not. Ere long that day is approaching, and drawing near, when the atheists, and refusers of Christ shall change their faith, and they shall change their fear, and they shall change their joy, and they shall change their mind. Ye shall change your faith, ye that are refusers of Christ: for I know there are many that think they have closed with Christ, who never did close with him; that faith shall flee away and ye shall believe the contrary. Ye shall change your love, or at least your opinion of your love. Ye think ye love Christ, but ye do not embrace him. I will tell you what will be your exercise, and I can tell you nothing so terrible, Christ shall eternally hate you, and ye shall eternally hate Christ: there shall be a mutual hatred betwixt you two for evermore. O that dreadful word, Zech. xi. 8. it shall then be accomplished to the

uttermost, 'My soul loatheth them, and their soul also abhorreth me.' And ye shall change your fear; for now, though ye fear not God, nor reverence man, yet the horror of God shall make you shake as a leaf: and ye shall change your light, and your judgment. Ye do now undervalue Christ, and think him of no worth; when Christ is presented unto you, 'there is no beauty why ye should desire him!' But oh! think on that day, when Christ shall sit down in the clouds, and ye shall see his beautiful face, every ray of which shall be able to captivate your hearts, if they were then capable to be ravished with the sight. O, what will be your thoughts of him? And if the blessings of a crucified Saviour come not upon you, then the eternal and unsupportable vengeance of Christ shall light upon you who will not condescend to take him. Ye shall be cursed in your life, ye shall be cursed in your death, and ye shall be cursed after death. What say ye to it? Are ye content to take him? Ye might bless the day that ever ye were born, if ye could once come to close with Christ. Now to him that hath the keys of the house of David, who can open your hearts to give him entry, we desire to give praise.

SERMON IV.

2. PETER, i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

THERE are three most glorious and excellent gifts that God hath bestowed upon man, there is that comprehensive gift of heaven, Jesus Christ, who is so called, John iv. 10. And sure such a gift as that, ought, in some sense, to blind our eyes, and make us to look upon all things that are below him as nothing. The *second* royal gift that the Lord hath given is the precious promises of the everlasting covenant, which are given to us through him. A Christian, who is united unto him by the bond of faith, may write this above the head of every promise of the everlasting covenant, 'this is mine, and this is mine.' His *third* precious gift is, the gift of faith, which is the grace that maketh use of the former two. And we conceive, that our making so little use of these three excellent gifts, is the great occasion and cause why these four lamentable evils hath befallen us.

1. The evil of a silent conscience, that though 'we be prone to

commit iniquity' and do 'love a reward under every green tree,' yet our consciences do not speak nor reprove us; and if at any time they do speak, yet there are some who are so possessed with a dumb and deaf spirit, that they can neither hear what God doth speak, nor can they hear their conscience. 2. The evil of a fierce rod. We know not the voice of the rod, 'and who is he that hath appointed it?' God doth not now 'open our ears to discipline, nor seal up our instruction.' 3. There is that evil of silent mercies, the mercies that we receive of God, we understand not the language of them. Are not our mercies, barbarians unto us, speaking to us in an unknown tongue? And yet we may say, there is not a rod, nor a mercy that a Christian meets with, but it hath a voice if we did understand it. And *lastly*, There is that evil which hath befallen us, and alas! this is the cap-stone of all, a silent God, who doth not hearken unto the voice of our cries, but turneth about the face of his throne, 'covering himself with a cloud in his anger,' so 'that our prayers cannot pass through. Alas! may not each Christian of this time cry out, 'Call me no more Naomi, but call me Mara, because the Lord hath dealt bitterly with me.' In short, I think there are these two things that may be our lamentation upon the high places of Israel: 1. That we live without sight of God. And 2. That we live without sight of ourselves; and all this is, because we live without sight of these precious gifts, Christ and his promises.

But now to come to the words, we told you, that in them there were these four things held forth concerning the promises:

1. The origin and fountain of the promises, in that word, *whereby*, or, *by whom*. 2. The properties of the promises, which we told you were these four. The *First* was, That the promises were free, held forth in that word, *they are given;* all the promises of the everlasting covenant being the noble gifts of God. The *Second* (of which we are to speak at this time) is this, That the promises of the covenant are unchangeable, which is imported also in that word, *they are given;* the gifts of God being indeed without repentance. And as to this, 1. We shall prove the truth of the point, and for this end consider that place, Numb. xxiii. 19. which was a part of Balaam's song, 'Hath he spoken it, and will he not also do it? Hath he said it, and shall it not also come to pass?' And Psalm lxxxix. 34. 'I will not break my covenant, nor alter the word that hath gone out of my mouth.' And the point is clear also from the name that the promises get in scripture, (are they not called 'the sure mercies of David,' Isa. lv. 3.) And are they not sometimes in scripture called *truth?* as we may see from Micah vii. 20. *Thirdly*, The na-

ture of the covenant proveth it, in that it is called 'an everlasting covenant;' and sometimes 'a covenant of salt,' because that covenant is above the reach of alteration or putrefaction. And *Fourthly*, It may be likewise shown from the constant experience that the saints have had of the unchangeableness of the promises. This Joshua taketh notice of, chap. xxiii. 13. where, when he was dying, 'There hath not failed (saith he) one thing of all these good things that God hath spoken:' and he is so confident of this, that he is forced to repeat that word over again in that verse; and he taketh notice of it, Joshua xxi. 45. where he hath the same expression again, 'There hath not failed (saith he) one thing of all the good things that God hath spoken unto us by Moses.' And, indeed there is near six thousand years experience that preacheth this truth; the promises are unchangeable; so that we may now say, 'The word of the Lord is tried as silver, it is purified in a furnace of earth hot seven times.' If there had been any falsehood in the precious promises of the everlasting covenant, six thousand years trial should have brought it to light: but doth not every one of the cloud of witnesses that have gone before us, leave this testimony upon record, 'Faithful is he that hath promised, who will also do it; his promise is with the night, and with the day?' It cannot be altered, the ordinances of heaven continue to this day, much less can this covenant of love be broken or altered; only we would have you to take this caution by the way, that there are some conditional promises that God passeth unto his people, which, in the depths of his spotless wisdom, he doth not accomplish unto those who never fulfil the condition; such was the promise that he gave to the Israelites in the land of Egypt, of their possessing the land of Canaan, who yet died in the wilderness. And hence is that strange word, Num. xiv. 34. "Ye shall know my breach of promise, saith the Lord:" which is a word spoken after the manner of men, not importing any change of purpose in God, but only showing, that because they did not believe, and so fulfil the condition of the promise, therefore it was not to be fulfilled personally to them.

The *Second* thing that we shall speak to upon this, that the promises are unchangeable, shall be to propose these six golden pillars, and excellent foundations upon which the unchangeableness of the promises are built: and the *First* of them is, 'The omnipotency of God: that there is nothing that he hath promised, but he is able to effectuate and bring to pass: therefore, 2 Cor. vi. 18. when God had been passing many excellent promises, he strengtheneth their faith with this, 'Thus saith the Lord God Almighty.' And, no doubt, where the word of this King is, there is

power, and who can say unto him, 'what dost thou?' O misbeliever of the precious promises of the covenant! be ashamed to cast up your eyes to heaven above, or to the earth beneath. We think the stars, the sun, the moon, and all the works of God, may speak out this to you, 'Do not misbelieve God, but trust in him, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. The *Second* golden pillar is, 'The wisdom and infinite counsel of God. He hath not only complete ability to accomplish the promises that he hath given, but he hath the depths and treasures of knowledge, by which he hath contrived the way of the accomplishment of them. Hence is that word, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. that the covenant is 'well ordered;' which speaketh out the wisdom of God; and then that word is subjoined, the covenant *is sure*. Yea, the covenant of grace is such a thing, and there is so much of the art of heaven, so much of the infinite wisdom shining in it, that it is called the 'counsel of God,' Heb. vi. 17. 'That ye might know the immutability of his counsel.' The *third* golden pillar is, 'The infinite love of God;' that though there be nothing in us that can make him accomplish the promises, yet he will take an argument from his own love, to make out such a promise to us; that there is sometimes (if not always) nothing in us, but that which may speak forth delays of the accomplishment of the promises; but when God can bring no argument from us, he can bring an argument from his own love, as Deut. vii. 8. where giving a reason of the accomplishment of promises, and of his love to them, 'I loved you (saith he), because I loved you;' there being no reason that can be given for love, but love. The *fourth* golden pillar is, 'The unchangeableness of the promises;' he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, and without all alteration and shadow of change. Hence ye may see, Exod. iii. 14. when God is repeating many precious promises unto Moses, he (as it were) strengtheneth Moses's faith with this, 'I am, (saith he) that I am;' which we conceive to point forth the unchangeableness of God, that what he hath said, he will certainly accomplish in its own time; and though 'the vision do tarry, yet at last it shall speak. The *Fifth* golden pillar is, 'The faithfulness of God;' and that he is one who cannot lie, but certainly will make out what he hath spoken. Love maketh the promises the faithfulness and power of God accomplisheth the promises, and the infinite wisdom of God chooseth the most fit time for performing them. Hence it is said, Psalm cxix. 89, 91. 'Thy word, O Lord, is for ever settled in heaven;' and the ground of it is in the following verse, 'For thy faithfulness is unto all generations.' Hence you may see, that oftentimes, when God is making pro-

mises to his own, he putteth to that word, 'I that speak in righteousness.' Isa xlv. and Isa. lxiii.

1. O! must not the promises be unchangeable that are made by the Father, who is the God of truth? Must not the promises be unchangeable, that are received and merited by the Son, who is truth itself and the 'faithful Witness, and Amen?' Must not the promises be unchangeable, that are applied by the Holy Ghost, who is 'the Spirit of truth?' And must not the promises be unchangeable, that are made known unto us by the gospel, that is 'the word of truth?' Was there ever any who could leave that upon record of God, that he was unfaithful in the accomplishment of his promises? O! what a clear sight of the faithfulness of God shall a Christian get, when he shall be standing upon the utmost line, between time and eternity? Then he will see God faithful in accomplishing all his promises unto him, from first to last.

The *last* golden pillar is, 'The justice of God.' His justice now putteth him to accomplish his promise; mercy and righteousness hath now kissed each other; hence is that word, 1 John i. 9. 'He is just and faithful to forgive:' so that now the accomplishment of the promises is not only an act of love, but it is an act of justice also. We confess, indeed, that love and mercy maketh the promises, but justice and truth putteth God to the accomplishment of them. Hence is that word, Micah vii. 10. 'To perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham.' Why is it mercy to Abraham, and why is it truth to Jacob? It is in short this, because mercy made the promises to Abraham, but truth accomplished them to Jacob.

The *third* thing that we shall speak to from this, That the promises are unchangeable, shall be to press these six duties upon you from this point.

O Christians and expectants of heaven! who have 'Christ in you, the hope of glory,' rejoice and be exceeding glad that the promises are unchangeable. 1. This is a duty that is pressed from that ground Heb vi 8. 'That by two immutable things we might have strong consolation.' There is exceeding much joy that may come to a Christian from this, that the promises shall be accomplished in their own time. We conceive that the word unchangeable is engraven upon the head of many a Christian's mercies. Is not unchangeable written above the head of your promises? Is not unchangeable written upon the head of your blessedness? Is not unchangeable written above the head of your enjoyments of God? That day is coming, when ye shall have unchangeable love, unchangeable enjoyment of God, and all things unchangeable. And we conceive, that if these two were believed, the truth

of the promises, and their unchangeableness, a Christian might walk through the valley of tears with joy, and comfort himself in hope.

The *Second* duty that we would press, is this, that ye would surcease and give over your disputings and carnal reasonings about the accomplishment of the promises. Since the promises of God are unchangeable, ought not we with this to silence misbelief, and all that blind human reason can say? This is pressed, Heb vi. 16 'An oath for confirmation is an end of all strife.' God's confirming of his covenant by an oath ought to cut short the disputings of misbelief. And here give me leave to point out a little those grounds, upon which it is that Christians do so much dispute the accomplishment of the promises; and so let you see how all these things may be answered, from those six pillars that are given of their unchangeableness

The *First* is, when dispensations do seem to contradict the truth of the promises; the promise speaketh one thing, and dispensations seem to speak another. And this is the occasion that oftentimes a Christian cries out, 'doth his promise fail for evermore?' This is clear from the practice of David, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. When dispensations were upon the top of the accomplishment, and the truth of the promises, then misbelief ariseth as a champion mighty to war, and crieth out, "I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul." And we conceive, that dispensations, contradicting the truth of the promises, were the occasion of his speaking that word, Psalm cxvi. 11. "I said in my haste, all men are liars.' And I would only say to you who dispute the truth of the promises upon this account, that dispensations contradict them, do but consider this, God in his ways is not like unto you. Would ye know the time when the promises are nearest their accomplishment? It is then when we can least see that they are to be accomplished. The promises are never nearer their performance, than when we think they are farthest off from it; and therefore let the faith of the omnipotency of God uphold your spirit under such a debate; then let dispensations speak what they will, ye may answer all with this, 'there is nothing too hard for him;' there is nothing too hard for the Lord. I grant, this may try the strength of the strongest faith; yea, we find it hath made the best to stagger, when they had no probabilities to tell them that the promises shall be accomplished. This was the ground of Sarah's misbelief, Gen. xviii. 12. that when she heard she should bear a son in her old age, she laughed within herself, and did, as it were, mock at such a promise. And this was the ground of Moses' misbelief, Numb. xi. 21. 22. he did not see a probability that such a multitude should be fed with

flesh; and therefore he did call in question the truth of that promise. This was the ground of the misbelief of that lord, that is made mention of, 2 Kings vii. 2. And this was the ground of Zechariah's misbelief, Luke i. 20. But I would say to you, who do so much consult with probability in the exercise of your faith, these two things.

1. There is nothing too hard for God. This was the very argument that God took to convince Sarah, in the 14 verse of that xviii. chap. 'Is there any thing too hard for God?' And 2. Faith is never in its native and spiritual exercise, till once probability contradict the truth of the promise; then faith is put upon the stage, then it doth act: but as long as faith and probabilities think one thing, then the day of the trial of the strength of faith is not yet come.

The *second* ground upon which Christians dispute the accomplishment of the promises is, their much disputing of their interest in God. Sometimes a Christian will believe a promise, and before the accomplishment of the promise come, their hope will be darkened, their interest in Christ will be obscured, and then they do quit their faith in adhering to the truth of that promise. These two were conjoined together, want of the faith of our interest, and want of the faith of the accomplishment of the promise; as is clear from that word, Psalm lxxvii. 8. 'Is his mercy clean gone?' There is disputing of his interest, and presently this is subjoined, 'doth his promise fail for evermore?' Except a Christian can read his name in the ancient records of heaven, and can seal this conclusion, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,' it will be a hard and difficult task for him, if not impossible, to believe the promises.

The *fourth* ground of a Christian's disputing the truth of the promise is, their mistaking the way how the promises are to be accomplished. There are some who suppose, that whenever they close with a promise by faith, there is no more but to enter into the possession of such a promise: but do not mistake it, between your believing the promise, and the accomplishment of it, there may be sad and dark days intervening, according to that word, in Mark x. 30. where Christ, passing great promises to his disciples, he, as it were, doth add, do not mistake me, that ye shall have these promises without trouble and affliction, 'Ye shall receive, saith he, an hundred fold in this life, with persecutions.' A Christian, when he believeth the promises, must resolve to have a winter before the spring time come, wherein the promise shall bud and flourish.

The *Fifth* ground of a Christian's disputing the truth of the promise is, when the promises are long in their accomplishing.

A Christian, when first he meeteth with a promise, will cry out, 'O believe;' but when time is taken for the accomplishment of it, then his faith beginneth to faint, and his hope beginneth to languish and give over. Yet sometimes Christians fall into the fault, when they believe a promise, they fix a day for the accomplishment of it; which if God do not keep, but go over, then they immediately cry out, 'What is my strength, that I should wait? and what is my confidence, that I should prolong my days?' This is clear in the practice of Abraham, where the promise of having a numerous seed being given to him, Gen. xii. 2. the long time before that promise was accomplished in part to him, was the occasion of the misbelief that he vented, Gen. xv. 3. 'O Lord, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?' But ye must know that before the vision shall speak, there is an appointed time that ye must wait, according to 1 Pet. v. 9, 10. 'After ye have suffered a while,' then the promises shall be accomplished, and ye shall be made perfect.

The *sixth* ground upon which Christians call in question the accomplishment of the promises is, the consideration of the greatness of the thing that is promised. When they compare it with their own worth and deserving, then they begin to dispute, O, shall such a thing be? Shall unworthy I? Shall sinful I? Shall self-destroying I? Shall I who am less than the least of his mercies, receive the accomplishment of such a mercy? This, we suppose, was one ground of Abraham's misbelief, Gen. xvii. 17. when he cried out, at the very time when the Lord was giving him the excellent promise of Isaac, 'O that Ishmael might live!' He thought an Isaac such an excellent mercy, that he could not, without presumption, expect the accomplishment of that promise. And in Zech. viii. 6. this was the ground of their misbelief, which God doth sweetly obviate, 'If it be wonderful in the eyes of the remnant of his people in these days, should it not also be wonderful in mine?'

The *last* ground upon which a Christian disputes the accomplishment of the promises is, when in the time between their believing, and the accomplishment of the promise, they fall into some gross iniquity. This maketh them exceedingly debate, whether the promise shall be accomplished unto them; for since they have transgressed the covenant of God, and have broken their purposes and resolutions, they cannot suppose God will abide faithful to them, and accomplish his promise to them. And the only way to answer this dispute is, to look to the faithfulness of God, and use that word, 2 Tim. ii. 13, 'Though we believe not, yet God doth abide faithful, he cannot deny himself.'

And now to shut up the *Second* duty that we press from the

unchangeableness of the promises, I shall only say these two words unto you: 1. Assure yourselves of this, that those accomplishments of the promises that come not through the lively exercise of faith, doth lose much of their sweetness, much of their lustre, and of their advantage. Sometimes a promise will be accomplished unto a Christian when he hath not been much in the constant and lively exercise of faith in believing such a promise: but then the disadvantages that attend such a one are not easily expressed. How often may he cry out, 'The Lord was in this place, and I was not aware?' How little of God doth he see in it? How short is he in praises, and rendering unto the Lord according to the good he hath received? How negligent in improving or keeping the mercy, and how loath to lay it out for God, when he seeth 'the Lord hath need of it?' And many things more of this kind, which may press us to be stedfast in believing. And 2. O dispute less, and believe more. What profit shall you have of your disputings! And if ye would produce all your strong arguments, why ye should not believe the promises, ye may drown them in this immense depth, God is *unchangeable*. Let me say but this further, there are three most remarkable changes in a Christian's making use of the promises. *First*, Sometimes he will believe the promises, and make application of them, and ere many hours go about, he will misbelieve that promise, which presently he believed. Will not sometimes a Christian in the morning cry out, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.' And ere twelve hours come, they will change their note, and cry out, my hope and my strength is perished from the Lord. Sometimes a Christian in the morning will cry out, 'my mountain standeth strong, I shall never be moved;' and ere many hours go about, he will change his note, and cry out, 'thou hast hid thy face from me, and I was troubled.' *Secondly*, Sometimes a promise will be to a Christian sweeter than the honey-comb; sometimes a Christian will die and live upon the promise; sometimes the believing of a promise will be to a Christian as the valley of Achor, a door of hope, that will make him to sing: and yet, ere many days go about, he may come to that very same promise, and it will prove tasteless to him, as the white of an egg, so that he may cry out, O that it were with me as in the months past, and in the ancient times? And O! where is the sweetness that I found in such a promise? O, it is gone, it is gone, and I am left desolate. *Thirdly*, Sometimes, when a Christian will be believing such a promise, and resting upon it, he will (through the Spirit of the Lord) see much light and clearness in that promise, he will take up the deep things of God that shine therein; and, at another time, he may come to that same promise, and it may be dark to him; so

that his light hath vanished. And sometimes the joy of a Christian in the promise will be gone when his light that he had in it may remain with him. A Christian may come to the promise, and find his ancient light, yet not his ancient joy, nor his ancient delight. Therefore if ye would have the promises always sweet upon you, pray over them, pray that God may breathe upon such a promise, and make it lively unto you.

The *third* thing that we would press upon you from the unchangeableness of the promise, is that which ye may gather from this, that the threatenings of God are unchangeable. These two are conjoined: yea, Joshua seemeth to infer the unchangeableness of the threatenings from the unchangeableness of the promises, chap. xxiii. 14. compared with ver. 15. And these two are conjoined, Zech. viii. 14, 15. 'That as I thought to punish you, and it hath come to pass; so I have thought to build you up, and it shall come to pass?' And I would, from this, desire you to stand in awe, lest you come under the lash of the unchangeable threatenings of God: for know, that as God is unchangeable in the promises, and there is not one word in all the everlasting covenant which shall not be accomplished, so likewise know, there is not a curse in all the book of the covenant, but shall be accomplished in its time. And know this likewise, that the day is coming, when that sad word in Hosea vii. 12. shall be accomplished, 'I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.' And O! ye who live in this place, if all the threatenings that your congregation hath heard shall be accomplished in their time, ye may take up the last words of Balaam's song, alas! 'Who shall live, when God shall do all those things?' And therefore, since the threatenings of God are unchangeable, as well as the promises; life and death is set before you, and either ye shall be the object of the unchangeable threatenings of God; or ye must be the object of the unchangeable promises of God; and therefore I would from this charge you, that as you would not be helpful to the destruction of your own immortal souls, you would not undervalue the threatenings that ye hear in your congregations, since there is a declaration past, that the threatenings in your congregations shall be accomplished.

Now there is that *fourth* duty that we would press upon you from this, that the promises are unchangeable; have an unchangeable love to the Promiser; let this commend the Promiser, let this constrain your hearts to delight in him. O what a blessed dispensation of love is this, that an unchangeable God should make unchangeable promises unto changeable creatures? If the promises of the covenant of grace were as changeable in their nature, as we are changeable, there should not one of us

go to heaven. But know, it is the blessed design of love, and it hath been a blessed practice of the infinite wisdom of God, that when he hath to do with changeable creatures, he will give them unchangeable promises. And I would once invite you again, that you would come near and embrace this unchangeable Promiser. I shall speak these five words that may persuade you; 1. Christ is easily to be gotten, if ye will but take him; ye will get Christ, if you will but hear; yea, for one listening of your ear to his voice, ye shall get him; according to that word, Isa. lv. 3. *Hear*, And what of that? *and your souls shall live.*' Is not this to get Christ at an easy rate? And as we spake before, ye will get Christ for a *look*, and is not that an easy rate? Isa. xlv. 22. 'Look unto me all the ends of the earth, and be ye saved.' Have ye a desire to take Christ? Ye shall get him for that desire; according to that word, Isa. lv. 1. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, let him come; and he that will, let him come.' Will ye but consent to take him, ye shall have him; and what can ye have at a lower rate than this? Shall never your cursed hands take the pen, and put your name to the blessed contract of marriage? Shall never these cursed hearts of yours cry forth, even so I take him? And do promise to live to him, and to die to him? O strange! will ye not do it? Upon what terms would the world have Christ? Is it possible to have him without a consent to take him? Oh! if ye would but open to him, he would condescend to come in unto you, and sup too with you, and ye with him. Do ye but stir to open, Christ hath the keys in his own hand, and he will help you to open. Oh! what if Christ, the precious gift of heaven, the eternal admiration of angels, that branch of righteousness, shall be despised, being offered upon so easy terms? Then cursed eternally shall be the person who thus undervalueth Christ, it had been better for him that he had never been born; cursed shall ye be in your birth, and in your life, and in your death: all the curses of the persons of the Trinity will light upon you; yea, believe it, O wife that hath a believing husband, in the day that the great sentence of eternal excommunication from the presence of the Lord shall be past against the undervaluers of Christ, a believing husband will say amen to that sentence, even to his wife who did thus undervalue that noble Plant of Renown; and the wife, upon the other part, will say, with hearty consent, amen to that sentence against the unbelieving husband; and the father to the son, and the son to the father.

Now, there is this *Fifth* duty that we would press upon you from this, that the promises are unchangeable, that ye would be persuaded to make the promises your portion, and your inheritance; what can ye want that will choose the promise for your

portion? I know your cursed eyes doth not love to make invisible promises, and that invisible crown, and an invisible God, your portion? We love to walk by sight, not by faith. But O! if you knew once what it was but to claim a relation to Christ, did you once know what it was to have but Christ a moment between your breasts, ye would cry forth, O! who would not love him, who is the King of saints? O! who would not be content to quit all things, that they might get Christ, that noble pearl of price?

And there is this *last* duty that we would press upon you from this, that the promises are unchangeable; read a lecture from this, O Christians! even your misbelief. God hath confirmed this everlasting covenant with an oath, with the blood of his Son, by the two great broad seals of heaven, the sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's supper. And what doth all these confirmations speak, but a dreadful misbelief? And that we may know what it is to be resting on a naked word of promise, I shall say no more, but desire you to consider, and take notice of these three. *First*, Ye have been solemnly and often invited by the ambassadors of Christ to close with him, and to take him for your husband and your lord; and will you consider presently, that all the angels in heaven, and all that are about the throne, and the three most glorious, most blessed Persons of the Trinity, are witnesses, and shall be to your dissent. And are there not many here, whose hearts could never be brought to give a a hearty consent to close with Christ, who is the great Promiser, and who hath laid all the bonds that heaven or earth could contrive to gain sinners hearts unto himself? O precious Christ! what could he do to persuade us to love him, which he hath not done? And yet that may be your name, which is in Eph. ii 2. 'Children of disobedience;' or, as the word is, 'Children of impersuasion; we cannot be persuaded.'

Secondly, I fear, if Christ himself would come from heaven and invite you, and say, here am I, embrace me, there are some here who would close not only their eyes, but their ears; they would close their eyes, lest the beauty of Christ should allure them; they would close their cursed ears, lest they should be gained and captivated by the sweet inchanting voice of that blessed Charmer, when he should charm so wisely. And *lastly*, Wilt thou tell me, O Christian, and expectant of heaven, what a day shall it be when all the unchangeable promises of God shall be accomplished? What a day shall it be when that promise shall be accomplished, 'ye shall see him as he is?' What a day shall it be when that promise shall be accomplished, 'ye shall be made like unto him? What a day shall it be when that promise shall be ac-

complished. 'ye shall know as ye are known? O! are ye not longing for the day of the full accomplishment of the precious promises of God, when ye shall sit down and comfort yourselves in the eternal and unspeakable fruition of them? O! let us long and wait till the day shall be when the voice shall be heard in heaven, that the 'mysteries of God are finished;' till the day when that voice shall be heard in heaven, 'behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him;' O! how unwilling are ye to leave this world? And how badly would we take up our rest on this side of Jordan? I think, if this was the night that that blessed voice was to be heard in heaven, 'behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him,' some, if not many of the Christians (that are so indeed) in this time, would cry forth, 'O! spare a little, that we may recover strength, before we go hence, and shall be no more.' Are ye not longing to bring the King over Jordan, and to bring him home to yourself, and to have your heart brought home to him? O blessed, blessed, are those that are above! 'Is not the voice of those that shout for victory, heard amongst them? Is not the voice of those that sing for joy, heard amongst them?' Job doth not now complain, 'Why dost thou make me to possess the iniquities of my youth, and settest a print upon my heels? David doth now no more complain, Why doth thy promises fail for evermore?' But rather doth sweetly sing, how is thy promises fulfilled for evermore? Heman doth now no more complain, 'While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted:' but rather crieth out; while I feel thy comforts, I am ravished. The voice of mourning is now sweetly gone away; and the voice of hallelujah, and of eternal praising of him who sitteth upon the throne, is now heard in the place of it. O such a day, that shall never admit of a following night! Now, to him that is upon his way, that will come, and shall come, and shall not tarry, we desire to give praise.

SERMON V.

2 PETER, i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

THERE are three cardinal and excellent graces that are exercised and taken up with the precious promises; there is this excellent grace of faith, that believeth the truth and good-

ness of the promise: there is the precious grace of hope, that with patience waiteth for the accomplishment of the promise, and doth stay until the vision speak: and that noble grace of love, that loveth the things that are promised, and taketh exceeding much delight in the Promiser. If we may be allowed to speak so, we think these strange revolutions and times we live in, are another Ecclesiastes, which doth fully preach forth the vanity and emptiness of all things that are below God: and we do indeed conceive, that it is the great design of God, in the darkning of our pleasant things: and in making 'every gourd to wither,' under the shadow of which we use to repose ourselves, and in famishing all the goods of the earth, to bring his own to delight themselves in this visible treasure, the promises of the everlasting covenant, and in him, who is the substance of them: and that since all things else are declared to be vanity, we might choose these as our portion for ever.

At the last occasion that we spake upon these words, we were speaking unto the properties of the promises, and we told you, that there were four of them held forth; 1. The freedom of the promises. 2. The unchangeableness of the promises; of which two we have spoken unto you. And now there remain other two to be spoken unto, viz. That the promises are exceeding great, and that they are exceeding precious; a sweet and excellent, though a rare conjunction, greatness and goodness here kissing one another, preciousness and highness linked together by the bond of union. And we shall speak unto these two properties together, and shall clear a little this thing, in what respects the promises of the covenant may be called *exceeding great* and *precious*. And we conceive, in short, they may be called in these eight respects. 1. They are *exceeding great*, in respect of the great price that was laid down to purchase them; there not being a promise of the everlasting covenant, above the head of which this may not be engraven in great letters, 'Here is the price and purchase of blood.' And, no doubt, this ought highly to commend the promises, that are bought at so infinite a rate. Must they not be great and precious things, that so wise a merchant did lay down so infinite a treasure for the purchasing of them? 2. They may be called exceeding great and precious, in respect of those great and precious things that are promised in them. Is not godliness a great thing? And this is within the bosom of a promise. Is not heaven and eternal enjoyment of God a great and precious thing? And yet this is within the bosom of a promise. Is not the knowing of God as he is, our perfect conformity with God, our victory over idols, great and excellent things? And yet all these are treasured up in the promises. 3.

They may be called exceeding great and precious, in respect of the great advantage that redounds unto a Christian through the enjoyment of them. The promises of the everlasting covenant (if we may so speak) are the pencils that draw the draughts and lineaments of the image of Christ upon the soul; it is the promise of the everlasting covenant, by which 'we are changed from glory to glory, as it were by the Spirit of the Lord; and as Peter doth here speak, the promises are such things, 'whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature.' 4. They may be called exceeding precious, in respect of the near relation that they have unto Jesus Christ. What are all the promises of the covenant of grace? Are they not streams and rivulets that flow from Jesus Christ? Christ is the fountain out of which all these promises do spring. And can this fountain, that is sweet in itself, send forth any bitter waters? must they not be precious things, that have such a noble descent? As the streams of love flowing out from the Father to the Son, and from him unto us, as the pouring out of ointment upon the head of Aaron, which ran down the head unto the skirts of his garments. 5. They may be called exceeding precious promises, in respect that they, or rather Christ in them, are the object of precious faith. What is the meat upon which faith doth feed? Is it not upon the promises of the covenant, and Christ the kernal of them? What are those things that faith taketh so much delight in, and is supported by? Is it not the promises of the covenant? 6. They may be called exceeding precious, in that they are the things that guide and lead us to precious Christ. There is not a promise within the book of the covenant, but, as it were, crieth forth with a loud voice, O! come to Christ. The promises are indeed the star that leadeth us unto the house where Christ doth lye, and there is no access unto Jesus Christ, but by a promise. Christ is to be found there, for he dwells within the bonds of the everlasting covenant, and there he will tryst with his people and be found of them. And 7, they may be called exceeding precious, in respect that the saints have found such sweetness, and such unspeakable delight in the promises. Did not David find great sweetness in the promises, when he cried forth, 'the words of thy mouth are better unto me than thousands of gold and silver?' Did he not find much sweetness in the promises, when he was constrained to cry out, 'thy law is sweeter unto me than the honey, and the honeycomb?' David (in a manner) was put to a *non plus* to find out a suitable similitude, and significant resemblance, to point out the sweetness of the promises. Though we may see the Christians of this time in a spiritual fever, thay have lost their spiritual taste; so that we may say, if we may allude unto that word, 2

Sam. xix. 25. 'I am this day fourscore years old, and cannot discern between good and evil, can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink?' They know not what it is to be overcome with the sweetness that is to be found in these excellent streams of divine consolation. *Lastly*, The promises may be called exceeding precious, in that the saints have a high and matchless account of them: hence that word, here rendered *precious*, may likewise be rendered *honourable*, which speaketh forth that there is nothing which hath so much of the esteem of a Christian as the promises! Would ye put wisdom, or riches, or honour, or what ye will, in the balance with the promises? they would cry forth, 'what should I profit to gain all these, if I lose the promises? We shall say no more of this, but that the promises are indeed that apple, the eating of which would make us, in some respect, (and in humility be it spoken), 'as God, knowing good and evil.' The promises are these things that do elevate the soul unto a divine conformity with God. And O that this might be the fruit of them? the promises are as cords let down to souls sinking 'in miry clay, and in the horrible pit:' do but lay hold upon them, and ye shall undoubtedly be drawn up, and ye shall set your feet upon a rock, and order all your goings.

Now we come to speak of the *third* thing in the words, which is the advantage and unspeakable gain that floweth to a Christian through the promise, held forth in these words, 'that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature;' which words do not hold forth, that there is any substantial change of our natures into the essence of God; but only holds forth this, that the souls that are taken up in believing the promises, they arise unto a likeness and conformity to him in holiness, wisdom, and righteousness. And as these advantages come to a Christian through the promises, 1. We must lay this for a ground, that the fruit of all cometh to him through the believing of the promises, and in making application of them.

And the *first* is, that they do exceedingly help and promove that excellent necessary work of mortification. This is clear from the words of the text, as likewise from 2 Cor. vii. 1. 'Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.' And the influences that the promises have upon sanctification, may be shown unto you in these three; *first*, They lay upon a Christian a divine bond and obligation to study holiness, that since Christ hath signified and testified his respect unto us in so ample and large a way, as to give us such precious promises, we ought to endeavour to study holiness, which is that great reward of love that he seeketh from us, for all things that

he hath bestowed, and we receive; and this is the meaning of that, 2 Cor. vii. 1. *Secondly*, The strength and furniture of a Christian, for fulfilling and accomplishing the work of sanctification, lieth within the promises. Are not the promises of God unto a Christian, as Samson's locks, in which their great strength doth lye?' And if once they cut themselves off from the promises through misbelief, their strength doth decay, and they become as other men. Where must the children to go for strength? Is it not to the promises? Is it not to the name of the Lord? Yea, this is the strength of a Christian, unto which he must resort continually. And *thirdly*, The promises of God hold forth that unspeakable reward which attendeth the Christian who shall study holiness: There are several promises of the everlasting covenant, that cry forth to the Christian, to him that overcometh will this promise be accomplished; to him that overcometh will this truth be fulfilled. And this doth exceedingly provoke a Christian to wrestle with all the discouragements he meeteth with in his way; he burieth all his anxieties within the circle of his immortal crown, which he hopeth for, and seeth in the promise; and his hope maketh him dispense with his wants, his expectation maketh him overcome his fears, and his looked for joy maketh him to dispense with his sorrows.

The *second* advantage is, that the faith of the promises do help a Christian to a spiritual and heavenly performance of the duty of prayer, and withal maketh him delight in the performance of it; this is clear from 2 Sam. vii. 27. where David believing the promises, it is subjoined 'he found in his heart to pray that prayer unto God;' and if any will look unto the words of that prayer, they will see them running in a heavenly and spiritual strain, speaking of him as one much acquainted with God, and under most high and majestic apprehensions of his glory; and is clear also, Psalm cxix. 147, 'I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried:' as if David had said, would ye know what made me thus fervent, thus diligent in prayer? It was this; 'I hoped in his word.' And hence it is, that he hath so many prayers in that Psalm. All were occasioned through the faith of the promises. As, for instance, when he cried forth, 'quicken me according to thy word, be merciful unto me according to thy word.'

We conceive, the faith of the promises helpeth a Christian in his prayer to these four divine ingredients of that duty. 1. It maketh him to pray with faith; when once he buildeth his prayer upon the promises, then he ventureth his prayer with much confidence of hope; according to that word, Psalm lxv. 3. where ye may see a man believing, and praying when he is believing and expressing his confidence most strangely in these words, *a*

for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away;' it is not said, *thou wilt purge them away*, but, *thou shalt;* which speaketh forth both the confidence and boldness of faith. A Christian who believeth the promises can take the promise in his hand and present it unto God, and say, fulfil this promise, since thou wilt not deny thy name, but art faithful. 2 It maketh a Christian pray with much humility; for when he understandeth that there is nothing which he hath but is the fruit and accomplishment of a promise, he doth not boast as those who have received, but walketh humbly under his enjoyments This is clear from Gen. xxxi. 10. where we see Jacob speaking to God with much humility; and in the ninth verse, he is speaking to God in much faith. And 3. It maketh a Christian pray with much love. Would ye know the great ground that we are so remiss in the exercise of love in prayer? It is, because we build not our prayers upon the promises. And 4. It helpeth a Christian to pray with much fervency. When was it that David cried to God? Was it not when he was believing the promise which was given to him of old? We would not plead with God with such remissness, if we believed the promises that are within the covenant.

The *third* advantage is, that the faith of the promises doth sometimes uphold a Christian under his spiritual desertions and temptations. Is it not certain, that sometimes he hath been ready to draw this conclusion, 'I am cast out of his sight, and shall no more behold him in the land of the living? when a promise, that hath been borne in upon his spirit, hath supported him, and made him to change his song, and to invert this conclusion. This is clear from Psalm xciv. 18. when he said, 'my foot slippeth;' there is the conclusion of misbelief and despair; 'yet thy mercy, O Lord, did hold me up;' there is the gate at which faith doth bring in consolation: not from by-gone experience only, but certainly from that which he found in some precious promises that was borne in upon his spirit. Many excellent cords of love hath Christ let down unto souls, when they have been going down into the depths, and the weeds have been wrapt about their heads. This is clear from Psalm cxix. 81. 'My soul fainteth for thy salvation:' as if David had said, I am in hazard to give over my hope, and to break my confidence: and would ye know what it was that supported me under such an estate? I hoped in thy word. Hath not this oftentimes been the song of a Christian in his darkest night, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts do delight my soul?' Faith will see a morning approaching in the time of the greatest trouble; and, no doubt, the promise that upholdeth Christians in their doubting, and most misbelie-

ving condition, the lively impression of that promise will remain a long time; and when first it is borne in upon their spirits, they will see no small love shining forth, in carving out such a promise to suit with such a providence as they are (it may be) meeting with for the time.

The *fourth* advantage in believing the promises is, that thereby we have an excellent help to patience and divine submission under our saddest outward afflictions. This is clear from Psalm xxxvii. 13. 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' And from Psalm cxix. 49, 50. where David, telling his exercise in the 49th verse, 'I hope (saith he) in thy word,' immediately he subjoineth, 'this is my comfort in my affliction:' as if he had said, if I had not had the promises to be my comforters, I had sat alone, and kept silent, and should have remained without comfort in the day of my adversity: and verse 92. 'Unless thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in my affliction.' And we conceive, in short, the influences which faith upon the promises hath upon the patient bearing of the cross, may be shown unto you in these two particulars: *First*, Faith is an excellent prophet, that always prophesieth unto us good things. Would you enquire at faith, at the mid-night of affliction, what is its opinion of God, and of your own estate? Faith would sweetly resolve you thus, 'wait on God, for I shall yet praise him, for the health of his countenance.' Faith knoweth not what it is to have a wrong construction of God; and therefore it is the noble interpreter of a Christian's cross. If sense, reason, and misbelief interpret your cross, they will make you cry unto God, 'why art thou become unto me as an enemy, or as a liar, or as waters that fail?' But if faith, that noble interpreter, do interpret your crosses, it will make you cry out, 'I know the thoughts of his heart, that they are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give me an expected end.' Faith letteth a Christian see a blessed outgate and issue of all the sad dispensations that he meeteth with. Faith, that is its divinity, 'I sow in tears, but I reap in joy: weeping it may be at the evening (saith faith), but joy shall come in the morning.' *Secondly*, It affordeth unto a Christian such soul-refreshing consolation in the midst of their afflictions, that (in a manner) they forget their sorrows, as waters that pass away. This David doth divinely assert in Psalm cxix. 50. 'This is my comfort in my affliction.' The faith of the promises is indeed that tree, which being cast into our waters of Marah, they will make them immediately become sweet.

The 5th advantage is, that the faith of the promises doth help a Christian to a greater distance from the world, and to live

as a pilgrim; as is clear from Heb. xi. 13. where these two are sweetly linked together, there is the embracing of the promises by faith, and confessing 'that they were strangers, and pilgrims on the earth.' And we shall show the influence that faith hath upon this, in these three, 1. It maketh a Christian see the end of all perfection here, and that there is nothing in the world 'that is not vanity and vexation of spirit.' Faith is that prospect, through which a Christian hath more clear discoveries of the vanity of all things; and this doth exceedingly help him to live as a pilgrim. 2. It letteth a Christian see the endless perfections of heaven, and bringeth it within sight of the immense and everlasting hope; and this maketh him to live as a pilgrim, and to declare plainly that he *seeketh a country*. And 3. It doth help him exceedingly forward in that blessed work of weaning his affections from all things that are here. Would ye know where a believer's heart is? it is in heaven. Would ye know where his thoughts are? they are in heaven. Would ye know where his conversation is? it is in heaven. Would ye know where his hope is? it is in heaven. His treasure is in heaven, and therefore his heart and conversation is there; and Christ in him is the hope of glory. And indeed more faith of the promises, would constrain us all to subscribe that confession of faith that is in Heb xi. 13.

The *sixth* advantage that attendeth the believing of the promises is, that it is the mother of muchspiritual joy and divine consolation, and maketh a Christian to be much in the exercise of Praise. This is clear from Psalm lxxi. 14. 'But I will hope continually;' and then immediately is subjoined, 'and will yet praise him more and more.' As likewise from Rom. xv. 13. and from 1 Pet. 1. 8. If a man would have his way to heaven made pleasant, and while they are sitting by the rivers of Babel, would be admitted to sing one of the songs of Zion,' then ought they to believe the promises, and 'choose them as their heritage for ever;' and then he may sing in hope, and praise in expectation, though he has but little in hand for the present. Indeed, when he looketh to his possession, there will not be much matter of rejoicing; but when he looketh upon his hopes and expectations, he may be constrained to cry forth, 'Awake up, O my glory, I myself will awake early.'

The *seventh* advantage is, that the faith of the promises is a notable mean to attain unto spiritual life. This is clear from Isa. xxxviii. 16. 'By all these things (saith Hezekiah) do men live, (speaking of the promises) and in all these things is the life of my spirit.' As likewise from Psalm cxix. 50. 'Thy word (saith David) hath quickened me.' O! what spiritual and

divine life doth attend that Christian who is much in the exercise of faith upon the promises? And what is the great occasion that our hearts are oftentimes dying within us, and we are like unto those that are among the dead? Is it not because we do not make use of the promises?

Eighthly, There is this advantage, that faith in the promises maketh a Christian have an high esteem of the thing that is promised. What is the reason that we write this above the head of the great things of the everlasting covenant, 'This is a Zoar, a little one?' Is it not, because we do not believe? Great things sometimes to us have no beauty, and there appeareth no comeliness in them why they should be desired; but if we had faith as 'a grain of mustard-seed,' we would cry out, how excellent are those things that are purchased for the saints? and how happy are they that have a right to the everlasting covenant, that is well ordered in all things and sure?

And, *ninthly*, The faith of the promises is the door at which the accomplishment of the promises doth enter in, according to the word, Luke i. 45. 'Blessed are they that believe, for there shall be a performance of those things that are spoken of the Lord unto them.' If we were more in waiting for the accomplishment of the promises, the vision would speak, and would not tarry: and, no doubt, a mercy coming to us as the fruit and performance of a promise, will make it an exceeding refreshful thing, when a Christian getteth leave to sing that song, which is in Isa. lix. 9. 'Lo this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will come and save us.' And when a mercy is the fruit and accomplishment of the promise, there is a beautiful lustre and dye upon that mercy, which no art could set on, but only the finger of the love of God. The smallest mercy then becometh a matchless mystery of love, and the most matchless mysteries of love, without the exercise of faith, become as things that are contemptible in our eyes, and we do not value nor prize them. Faith maketh our thoughts to ascend, and misbelief maketh our thoughts to descend, in relation to the mercies of heaven.

Lastly, Besides all these advantages, we have these two mentioned in the text, 1. 'That by them we are made partakers of the divine nature,' and are brought up to that blessed conformity with God, which we had lost in the fall. 2. 'That by them we escape the corruption in the world through lust.' I intend not particularly to open up the nature of these things at this time, because I am only to speak of the exercise of faith in the promises. But O! what excellent mercies are these, to get on the beauty of the image of God, and get off these ugly defilements

which were the image of Satan upon our souls? O! how should this commend the promises unto us? That by faith in them, we all behold, with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now that which, *secondly*, we shall speak to, shall be the advantages that result to a Christian from a spiritual observation of the Lord's accomplishing his promises. For here ye see in the text, the apostle maketh an observation of those excellent things that are the fruit of these precious promises, when they are accomplished. And the *First* advantage is, that it stampeth the soul of a believer with most divine impressions of love. This is clear from Isa. xxxviii. 15. where Hezekiah crieth out, 'what shall I say, he hath spoken it himself, and hath done it?' Being, (as it were) astonished and overcome with the apprehensions of the condescendency of God, he is put to a *non-plus*, and to 'what shall I say?' Psalm xli. 8. 'As we have heard (saith David) so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts;' that is, according to his promise, we have had suitable performance: and he subjoineth, ver. 9. that which was both their exercise and their advantage, 'we have thought of thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple;' as it were, the observation of the performance of the promise, made their thoughts wholly to be taken up with the love of God; and, no doubt, there is such love in performing one promise, that eternity would be insufficient to make a commentary upon. It is one wonder of condescendency, that he should oblige and bind himself to us by promises; and another depth of wonderful love, that he should perform these bonds, and answer his word with performance.

The *second* advantage is, that the observing the accomplishment of the promises, doth bring into the soul new discoveries of God. This is clear from Exod. vi. 3. where God thus speaketh to Moses, 'I was known (saith he) unto Abraham, and unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them,' that is, by the name of giving an accomplishment unto my promises, that name was not discovered unto them, but should be made known unto their posterity, in the day when his promises shall pass into performance. And hence it is, that when the Lord is speaking of the accomplishment of great promises, he doth so often in scripture subjoin that word, 'ye shall know that I am Jehovah, or the Lord,' Isa. xlix. 23. lii. and lx. lxi. And indeed we daily find it so; for is not every accomplishment of a promise, a new discovery of the wisdom of God, that shineth in the suitable timing of the accomplishment thereof? Is not every accomplishment of a

promise, a new discovery of the faithfulness of God, that he will not alter that which hath gone out of his mouth? And is not every performance of the promise, a new discovery of the love of God, that he desireth to magnify his mercies above all his works? And a new discovery of the power and omnipotency of God, that can bring forth the performance of his promise, notwithstanding of all the things that are in the way; yea, 'maketh things that are not, to be, and bringeth to nought things that are?'

The *third* advantage is, that it helpeth a Christian to have high apprehensions, and majestic uptakings of God. This is clear from 1 Tim. i. 15. compared with verse 17. where Paul, closing with that promise, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, and beholding the accomplishment of it in himself, his heart, as it were, is elevated within him, and he crieth out, 'Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever Amen.' There is an emphasis on the word, *now;* as if Paul had said, I could never praise and extol him till now, and I am so much bound to Christ, that I will not delay this exercise one moment, now I will bless him. And it is clear from Micah vii. 8. where the accomplishment of the promises that are there, makes the church cry out, 'who is like unto thee?' He became matchless unto them through the performance of the promises. And so we conceive, that those who are much in spiritual observation of the performance of the promises, will see precious draughts of the majesty of God engraven upon them, so that they will be constrained to cry out, that he above is mighty, that his name is Jehovah, and in him is everlasting strength, upon which we ought to rely in our greatest straits.

The *fourth* advantage is, the observation of the accomplishment of the promises, will help a Christian when he is reduced into new straits, to be much in the exercise of faith upon God. His former experience will produce hope in his soul; for there is not one discovery of the faithfulness of God, but hath a voice, and crieth out, O believe him, who is able to give a clear being unto his word. This is clear from Psalm lvi. at the close, 'Thou hast delivered my soul from death,' saith David; and then he subjoineth, 'wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling?' that is, I am certainly persuaded, thou wilt likewise perform that word unto me: and from Psalm lvii. 2, 3. where he giveth this title unto God, that he performeth all things for him; and then he subjoineth, 'he shall send from heaven and save me.' And (by the way) the soul that can give God the title and style, that he performeth all things for it, that soul must of necessity be in

a choice and excellent state. And the point is likewise clear from 2 Cor. i. 10. where Paul saith, 'God hath delivered me, and he doth deliver me;' and from hence he draweth this conclusion of faith, 'and he will yet deliver me.' We confess, sometimes our former experiences of the faithfulness of God, doth not support our faith when we are reduced into new difficulties, which is either occasioned through the greatness of the straits that we are now put to, (in our apprehensions) above that which we were put to before; so that though God did deliver us when we were 'running with footmen,' yet we have no faith to believe that he shall deliver us when we are about to 'contend with horses,' or else it is through the unfaithfulness of our walk, in not answering the precious dispensations of Christ in the accomplishment of his promises; for this maketh us that we cannot with boldness make use of his word, when we are brought into a new strait. A guilty conscience is the mother of misbelief.

The *Fifth* advantage is, the accomplishment of the promises doth occasion much spiritual joy and rejoicing unto his own. We told you, the giving of the promises occasioneth joy, and when the promises travaileth in birth, and bringeth forth, that occasioneth much more spiritual joy. This is clear from Psalm xxviii. 7. 'The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusteth in him, and I was helped.' And he draweth this excellent conclusion from it, 'therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my soul will I praise him.' And we conceive, that sometimes God trusteth the accomplishment of the promises with some precious manifestation of himself to the soul, 'which maketh them to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: but, however, this is a matter of a spiritual song, 'That mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace are kissing one another.' Is it not a pleasant matter of song, to behold *love* making *promises*, and *faithfulness* accomplishing them?

And the *last* is, that the observation of the accomplishment of the promises, doth strengthen a Christian's faith in his interest in God: so that now many disputings are silenced, and many questions now are out of the way. This is clear from Psalm xxxi. 21, 22. David confesseth his quarrelling before, but when once the Lord had showed him his marvellous loving kindness in a strong city, then all his quarrel was against himself, because he had quarrelled, and did say in his haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes.

And now we shall only speak a little unto some duties that we would press upon you from that which we have spoken; and the *first* duty is, that Christians should be much in waiting for the accomplishment of the promises, and standing upon their

watch-tower, until the visions shall speak. And we shall only give you these to enforce it. It is commanded that you should do so. This is clear from Psalm xxvii. at the close, where David presseth this duty very much, 'Wait on the Lord,' saith he; and as if this was not enough, he repeats the command again in the same verse, 'wait, I say, on the Lord.' And truly, the doubting of it speaketh not only the advantage that is in it, but our difficulty to obey it, and the great necessity that we have to go about it: and the same word is repeated by David, Psalm xxxi. 24. 'Be of good courage;' which is the same as to wait upon the Lord.

2. Those who wait patiently for the accomplishment of the promises, God will strengthen them to wait. This is clear from Psalm xxvii. at the close, 'Wait on the Lord:' and when we are Hagar-like, casting away the child of hope, he will open our eyes, and give us refreshment, by which we may be supported under our disquietment, 'and he shall strengthen thine heart.' And there is this, *thirdly*, There shall be a speedy accomplishment of the promises. It is not long before all the mercies that ever the Lord hath promised, and thou hast believed, shall be told down to you, as it were, in one sum, principal and interest; as is clear from Heb. ii. 3. where he positively asserteth, 'that the vision shall come, and will not tarry.' There is indeed a pleasant seeming contradiction in that verse, he had said before, 'that the vision would tarry,' and yet here he saith, 'that the vision will not tarry, but will surely come;' in which we may see the divinity both of sense and faith, and that noble contradiction that is between their assertions. Sense asserteth, that the promise doth tarry too long: and faith crieth out, it will surely come, it will not tarry; which is set down, 2 Pet. iii. 8. 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise.' 4. Promises that come unto us through the most strong and lively exercise of faith, and that are expected and longed for by us before they come, are most relishing and sweet, and those mercies come unto us with a binding tie of love. This is somewhat pointed at in Isa. xxv. 9. where the church crieth out, 'Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation.' Their waiting and expecting the promise to be accomplished in its time, is there the fountain of their song, and of their spiritual joy. I think sometimes Christians are like that misbelieving lord, 2. Kings vii. 2. that though they meet with the accomplishment of a promise, yet they do not taste of the sweetness that is in it, because they did not believe the word the Lord.

The *second* duty that we would press from what we have spoken is, that Christians should close with the promises for their everlasting inheritance; since the promises of the covenant are ex-

ceeding great and precious, and the advantage that lieth in them is unspeakable. O! should not these things proclaim aloud unto us, close with the promises as your portion for ever? I think, one that hath a right unto the promises, and hath entered himself heir to the vast inheritance, may sometimes rejoice in the threefold mystery of the gospel, that to a natural man can appear no other than a contradiction: 1. He may say sometimes, I have nothing, and yet I possess all things: for when he looketh to his being in the world, he is a poor Lazarus, having no place whereon to lay his head: but when he casteth his eyes upon his spiritual inheritance, then he beholdeth his treasure, and is constrained to cry out, I possess all things. 2. Sometimes he may cry out, I am rich, and yet I am exceeding poor: he may be rich in hopes, and yet poor in his possessions. Much of a Christian's treasure lieth in hope, it maketh him cheerfully give up every thing in comparison of it. This is the motto of a Christian, *spero meliora*, which he holdeth up in his flag, even in the greatest storm, and at length he findeth it true, that 'hope maketh not ashamed.' 3. Sometimes the Christian will cry out. I am always sorrowing, and yet, always rejoicing: when he casteth his eye upon himself, he will sit down and water his couch with tears: but when he reflecteth upon Jesus Christ, 'he will rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' A Christian can both weep and rejoice at one time, and again he can rejoice and weep. No doubt, the reflecting upon the glorious hope, and the everlasting crown that awaiteth him, will make a Christian rejoice under all his disquietments and anxieties in the world; he can look to the back of time, and behold a glorious inheritance. Christians have the eye of an eagle, that can behold and discern things afar off.

The *Third* duty that we would press upon you is, to long for the day when all the promises of the covenant of grace shall receive their complete accomplishment, and when ye shall enter into the everlasting fruition of all the things wherein your blessedness lieth. There is a threefold *come* that Christ speaketh to the soul that is united unto him. all which they cheerfully obey. There is that first *come*, which is in Matth xi. 28. 'Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden.' And there is that second *come*, Isa. xxvi. 20. 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers;' which is to entertain that exalted correspondence with him in troublesome times. And there is that third matchless *come* when Christ shall say to his own in that day when they shall stand before his tribunal, 'Come, O blessed of my Father.' Shall we say it, that if we had 'faith as a grain of mustard-seed,' we would cry forth, 'why is his chariots so long

in coming.' And did we relish, or put a high account on the matchless promises of the boundless covenant, we would cry forth, 'O that our time would flee away as the ships of desire!' I shall say no more but this, Christ is gone up with a shout unto heaven, and shall come again with the sound of a trumpet: 'sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises unto our God, sing praises.'

The *last* thing that we would press upon you, is, that ye would mark the time of the accomplishment of the promises. And as to this, I shall say but these, 1. That ordinarily the time of the accomplishment of the promises is, in the time when sense, reason, and probability doth most contradict them. This is clear from Ezek. xxxvii. in fulfilling the promises that were past to Judah in their captivity: was it not when they were as a 'valley of dead bones,' and their hopes were (in a manner) cut off for their part? from the 11th verse of that chapter, compared with the 12. And 2. That the time of the accomplishment of the promises, ordinarily is from Daniel ix. 2, 3. and from Jer. xxix. 12. compared, a praying time: this is also clear with the 10. and the 12. 'Thus saith the Lord,' the time when he shall visit them, and perform his good word unto them, in causing them to return, it shall be a time 'when they shall call upon me, and shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto them.' And 3. The time of the accomplishment of his promise, is a time when our thoughts of them are high and large. When once we begin to value our mercies, it is a sign that our mercy is near, and bringeth forth. However, it is our duty to wait on him, who can give a being unto his word, and sweetly perform his promises. We ought not to limit infinite wisdom, nor say to him who is infinite in strength, how can such a thing be? But we may answer all objections of misbelief with this, "God hath spoken it, and he will also do it;" and draw all objections of misbelief in that glorious and mysterious name of his, *I am that I am.* To him be praise.

A

SERMON

CONCERNING THE

Usefulness of FAITH in advancing SANCTIFICATION.

Acts xxvi. 18. *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me.*

WHEN we began our discourse upon the precious and excellent grace of faith, we told you, that we intended to speak of it under a twofold notion and consideration. *First*, As it layeth hold upon Christ for justification; and of this we have spoken to you at some length, as ye have heard. *Secondly*, As it closeth with Christ for sanctification; and of this we are now to speak, which is a part of that excellent oration and discourse that Paul had before Agrippa in his own defence: in which oration and discourse of his ye may behold these four things eminently shining. 1. That godliness and good manners are not inconsistent, nor contrary to each other; therefore ye will see in the second and third verses of this chapter, Paul acting the part of a courtly orator; and believe it, there is more good manners to be learned by being seven days in the school of Christ, than by being seven years in the courts of France. This 2. That innocent policy he made use of in the deliverance of this oration, which likewise appeareth in the second and third verses of this chapter, where he endeavours to insinuate and ingratiate himself into the favour of the person before whom he stood: I confess piety is the best policy, that is taken up in entertaining piety. Howbeit, true policy may move in one orb and sphere with piety, and the one is not contrary to the other in some case. 3, This shineth in that discourse, even the spiritual boldness Paul had, in giving an excellent confession of his faith, and declaring him to be God, even Jesus Christ, in whom he did believe: Christ witnessed a glorious confesion before Pontius Pilate for him, and he would witness a glorious confession before Agrippa for Christ; that since Christ had not denied him in that notable day, he would not now deny precious Christ in this day, and this is from the beginning and all alongst. *Lastly*, This shineth in the words that Paul doth set forth, the matchless freedom and unspeakable riches of Christ, not only toward

himself, in that he did cast the lot of everlasting love toward him, but likewise towards the Gentiles, to whom he was sent as a preacher, and that he did gloriously condescend to visit the dark places of the earth, and to have 'the morning and the day spring from on high,' arising on the habitations of cruelty. In the verse which we have read, you may behold these five glorious ends of the preaching of the gospel, for the attaining of which, ministers are made instruments under God. The *first* is, 'To open the eyes of the blind,' which in short is this, to give those who are ignorant of God, the spiritual knowledge of the deep mysteries of the Father, and of the Son; so that from this ye may see, that the gospel hath a kind of omnipotency in producing effects above the power of nature.

The *second* we may see in these words, 'to remove them from darkness to light.' Which importeth these two; 1. The removing of persons from an estate of misery, into an estate of consummate joy. 2. The removing of persons from an estate of iniquity into an estate of holiness. Darkness, in scripture, pointeth out sin, and light in scripture pointeth out holiness. *Thirdly*, The bringing us 'from under the power of Satan unto God,' making a blessed exchange of captivity and bondage, that those who were under the captivity of Satan, may be under the captivity of love: that those who were under the bondage of sin, may be brought under the obedience of Christ, 'whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light,' Matth. ix. 30. *Fourthly*, That persons may receive 'the remission of sin, and the forgiveness of their iniquity.' This is the great voice of the gospel, come to a crucified Christ, come to a pardoning Christ, come to a glorified Christ, who hath the pardon of iniquity in one hand, and the riches of himself in the other. And these are the great motives by which he studieth to persuade us to come. And the *last* is in the close of the verse, 'that persons may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me;' that is, that they have a share of that glorious mansion, of that excellent kingdom which Christ hath purchased, and hath gone before to prepare. And withal, in this verse, ye may see the beautiful and orderly method that the gospel keepeth in conquering souls, and you may see the excellent allurements, and the persuasive arguments that Christ holdeth forth to conquer you. Christ, as it were, cometh to us not clothed with the robes of majesty, but clothed with the robes of love and advantage, knowing that in this posture he shall most gain our hearts.

Now, in speaking unto that last end of the preaching of the gospel, we shall only, according to our present purpose, take no-

tice of this one thing from it (not intending to prosecute it as an end of the gospel, but as a property of faith), and it is, that faith in Jesus Christ hath a noble influence upon the growth of sanctification, and the attaining of holiness, 'They are sanctified (saith he) through faith in me.' We shall not stand long to clear this unto you, it is evident from Acts xv. 9. where the apostle telleth us of 'purifying our hearts by faith;' and likewise, 1 Tim. i. 5. where a pure heart, and faith unfeigned,' are joined and linked together. As likewise, 1 John iii. 3. 'Every man that hath his hope in him, he purifieth himself.' All the graces of the gospel are linked together by a golden and unseparable chain; so that he who obtaineth one, obtaineth all: yea, more, all the graces of the gospel have a mutual influence upon one another's growth; so that we may compare them unto Hippocrates's twins, of whom it was reported, 'They did laugh and weep together, and they did grow together;' even so, when one grace doth rejoice, the rest rejoiceth with it; and when one grace doth mourn, the rest also mourneth with it; and when one grace doth grow, the other graces of the Spirit likewise groweth apace.

There are only three particulars that we shall insist a little upon; *first*, We shall shew you how faith hath influence upon the attaining of sanctification; and this we shall make clear unto you in these respects.

1. In that it discovereth to the soul that matchless excellency, that transcendent beauty, and that surpassing comeliness which is in Christ; which sight doth exceedingly persuade the soul to draw this conclusion, 'what have I to do any more with idols? A glorious sight of Christ, and acquaintance with him, maketh us lose our acquaintance with our idols; and when once we are united unto Christ by faith, we break the union we had with them. And, indeed, the want of the knowledge of the excellent comeliness that is in Christ, and of love to him, is the great cause why the poorest deities and idols in the world taketh up your hearts; did ye but once see him who is the glorious Sun of righteousness, ye would be forced to put in your *amen* unto that excellent confession of faith, Eccles. i. 2. 'Vanity of vanities, and all is but vanity and vexation of spirit.'

2. In that it is the grace which discovers unto a Christian the spotless holiness of Christ. Faith doth not only discover the beauty of Christ, but likewise his holiness, and this maketh a soul fall in love with that excellent thing sanctification. It is recorded amongst the first steps to sin and misery, that we desire 'to be as God, knowing good and evil; but certainly it is amongst the first steps to life and happiness, when the soul desireth 'to be

holy, as he is holy.' And I suppose this is the great ground that ye are not much endeavouring a blessed conformity to God, and to be partakers of the blessed image of Christ, ye know not the beauty of holiness.

3. Faith layeth hold upon Jesus Christ, and draweth strength and virtue from him, for the conquering of lusts, and in raising us up into a blessed conformity unto himself. When the Christian is weak, faith is that noble correspondent between the emptiness that is in us, and the fulness that is in Christ. Faith is that noble correspondent between the weakness that is in us, and the everlasting strength that is in him; therefore, there are two noble and excellent counsels of faith, *first*, It counsels us, not to lean to our own strength. And *secondly*, To have our recourse unto him whose name is Jehovah, that everlasting strength. And, no doubt, if we were more taken up in employing Christ by faith, that prophesy should be accomplished, 'I will make the feeble ones as David, and David as the angels of God.' And when a Christian is most diffident in himself, then God should prove himself to be Almighty, and All-sufficient.

And 4. Faith's influence may be cleared in this, that it layeth hold upon the promises, and doth believe them; and believing the promises bringeth forth that noble birth, 'conformity to God;' according to that word upon which we were speaking, 2 Pet. i. 4. By believing the promises, this is the advantage of it, 'we are by them made partakers of the divine nature.'

Faith also believeth the threatenings that are past in scripture against sin, and the believing them hath a strong and undoubted influence upon the attaining and growth of sanctification. Faith strengtheneth the Christian against the committing of iniquity, with these two words, Rom. vi. 29. 'O soul (saith faith), commit not iniquity, for the wages of sin is death.' And that word, Rev. xxi. ult. 'There shall in no wise enter into that city any thing that is unclean, or that committeth iniquity.' And be persuaded of it, that the faith of the threatenings, and of the promises that are in scripture, would be as a threefold cord, not easily broken to restrain you from the acting of iniquity.' And shall I tell you briefly, the ground why these cursed hearts of ours do commit iniquity with so little fear, and with so much delight? It is even this, because we believe not the threatenings of God, which shall be accomplished in their own season; for it is impossible, if ye believe that word, Rev. xxi. ult. 'That nothing shall enter into the new Jerusalem that defileth, or worketh abomination, or that maketh a lie;' that ye durst for a world adventure upon the committing of iniquity as ye do? And I shall only say to such that do undervalue the threatenings of God

the day is coming when they shall be constrained to cry out, he hath spoken it, and hath done it, and faithful is he. There is not one jot nor tittle in the word of the Lord that shall fall to the ground. And believe it, God will be faithful in the accomplishment of his threatenings, as he is faithful in the accomplishment of his promises.

6 Faith discovereth unto a Christian the noble excellencies, and those spiritual dignities that are in that everlasting estate that is provided for the saints in light. Faith, as it were, carrieth the soul to the top of Pisgah, from which it is permitted to behold the promised land. And truly, the seeing of those noble things that are provided for the saints, cannot but make them study holiness, since they know that it is impossible to attain to that estate without holiness, because he hath said, 'without holiness no man shall see God.' O then! if once ye saw heaven, ye would be constrained to walk in the path of sanctification, since it is the glorious way by which ye must walk in through the gates of that blessed city; but ye know not the happiness that is there, it is a fancy and notion unto you; and the reason is, because ye do not study to conform yourselves unto the blessed image of God. And I would only ask you this one question, is it possible, that such delusion as this can overtake you, as to think, that you, who never studied holiness on earth, shall enter into heaven's gates? I know that there are some who say in their hearts, 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart.' And many suppose, that they might fight and overcome, that they may quit the estate of nature, and be complete in the estate of grace, all in one day; but why will you deceive yourselves, 'Can a nation be born in one day?' Or, is there but one step between hell and heaven? O remember, though nothing be impossible with God, yet there was but one thief saved upon the cross.

7. Faith hath influence upon the attaining of holiness in this respect, that it believeth the exceeding great advantages that are promised unto the person who studieth holiness. Faith believeth that word, Matth. v. 8. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Faith layeth hold upon the truth of these excellent sayings, and maketh the Christian endeavour to attain unto a likeness and conformity with him, so that he may be admitted to behold his face through all eternity, and made like unto him.

8. Faith discovereth unto a Christian the sinfulness of sin. This is never done till once they be in the lively exercise of the grace of faith. And I will give you these three grounds why faith completely discovereth the sinfulness of sin.

1. Faith letteth us see the person against whom we commit this sin, and that doth exceedingly aggravate sin; for when the Christian is admitted to behold God, and to see the matchless excellency that is in him, then he saith, what a beast was I, to offend such a glorious majesty as he is? what a fool was I, to kick against the pricks, or to enter into the lists with such an infinite God.

2. Faith letteth a Christian see the great obligations of love that Christ hath imposed upon us; faith letteth us see the ancient and everlasting love of Christ; faith is the grace that letteth us see his sufferings; faith letteth us see all that he hath done for us; and this maketh the Christian to cry out, do I thus requit the Lord, O foolish one, and unwise? And, no doubt, if a Christian were more taken up in the study of his duty, he would be less in contracting debt; and were you but seriously taken up in the study of these two great registers; 1. The register in which all the infinite acts of love are recorded; and, 2. The register in which all our acts of offending precious Christ are written, ye would be astonished and ashamed to see so much forgiven you, and durst not sin any more. There ye would see infinite mercy desiring to rejoice over judgment; and there ye would see the spotless riches of the transcendent grace that is in Christ.

3. Faith letteth a Christian see the disadvantages of sin, and what woful effects doth follow upon it; and this showeth the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

The *Second* thing that we shall speak to concerning faith's influence in the attaining of sanctification, shall be to inquire a little into those things that hinder even believers from attaining this blessed effect of their faith; for some Christians there are, that in some respects are taken up in the exercise of faith, making use of Christ for sanctification, and yet their making use of Christ by faith doth not weaken the strength of their idols, (at least to their apprehensions) neither doth raise them up to a conformity with God; so that they are constrained sometimes to cry out, 'I shall once fall by the hand of one of mine iniquities;' and when they fight and do not overcome, they are at last constrained to say, 'there is no hope.'

The *First* ground of such a dispensation is, that a Christian is not constant in his actings of faith; he will be strong in faith to day, and when the morrow cometh, he will faint in the exercise, that doth exceedingly interrupt that noble victory of faith; for when faith hath gotten its advantages, they lose them through security and negligence; this is a command that should be continually obeyed, 'trust in the Lord at all times.' And, no doubt,

if a Christian was more taken up in the constant acting of faith,' he should sometimes sing you that song, 'I trusted in God, and I was helped.'

Secondly, The most part of Christians are not strong and vigorous in the actings of their faith; their faith is exceeding weak, and so they cannot bring forth these noble fruits and effects of faith. If we were trusting in God with all our hearts, then that promise, Psalm xxxvii. 5. should be accomplished unto us, 'Trust in the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass.' *Thirdly*, There is a strong heart-conjunction and soul-union between us and our idols. We are joined to our idols, and therefore we cannot be easily divorced: yea, when we are in the heat of the war against them, there is a procurator within that crieth, O spare this little one; or, this profitable; or, pleasant one: and this is ordinarily our practice, to spare the choicest of our idols; so that our Agags may cry out, the bitterness of death is past. But I confess, if that union were once dissolved, we should then be heard with the greatest earnestness to cry out, 'O blessed be the Lord, that teacheth my hands to fight. *Fourthly* Sometimes a Christian layeth too much weight upon the actings of faith, and doth not employ faith, but as an instrument to which Christ must bestow strength to conquer. Sometimes we think that faith hath the virtue of overcoming in its own hand: but remember, faith is but an empty thing without Christ; as you may see, Acts xv. 9. where the 'purifying of their hearts by faith' is ascribed to the Holy Ghost: so that the activity of faith is from him, and not in itself. *Fifthly*, A Christian doth not hate sin with a perfect hatred, even in the time of his warfare with his lusts, and with those strong idols that are within him: but here is a secret heart-inclination to that very idol which he doth oppose; so that oftentimes there is this twofold contradiction in a Christian; sometimes his light will cry, mortify such an idol; and yet his heart will cry out, O spare such an idol! yea, more, sometimes his heart will cry, mortify such an idol; and yet his heart will cry, O spare such an idol! that is to say, there will be one part of our affection crying one thing, and another part of it will cry another thing. O but there is a remarkable command for the perfect hatred of sin, Rom. xi. 'Abhor that which is evil;' the word is in the original, 'Hate evil as ye would do hell;' that is, have perfect hatred to sin; O to hate sin as much as hell; and join that word, Eph. v. 11. 'Reprove the unfruitful works of darkness;' or as the word may be rendered, 'Make out by unanswerable arguments,' to your temptation, that you cannot embrace the 'unfruitful works of darkness; convince your tempta-

tions that ye cannot do it. It was a noble argument of Joseph, when he was tempted, 'how shall I do this?' He put the temptation, as it were, to it; O temptation! give me one ground why I should commit such an iniquity. And certainly if we were thus reasoning with our temptations, they would flee before us; but the truth is, we embrace the desire of our temptation upon implicit faith. It is a sad regret, and yet I shall utter it, O! if men would but deal with God, as they do by Satan, we never dispute the promise of Satan, and never examine the allurements he setteth forth; and yet we constantly dispute with God upon every thing. *Sixthly*, A Christian advanceth not in the growth of sanctification, though in some measure exercising faith, because he hath not such a heart to holiness. If we discovered more the excellent beauty there is in being clothed with that glorious robe of the righteousness of Christ, and in having the sweet draught of the image of Christ engraven upon our hearts, we would have more victory over our lusts. There is a command for *perfect love* to that which is good and holy, Rom. xii. 9. 'Cleave (saith he) to that which is good;' or, as the word may be rendered, 'Be married and glued to that which is good;' let there be an unseparable and indissolvable knot of union between you and that which is good. And certainly if once we believed that report which is given of holiness, we would endeavour more to be clothed with it; but this is the great ground that we advance not in holiness, we know not the advantage nor dignity to be made like God. O will ye think on it? what a thing is it for you, who are the dust of his feet, to be made conform to him? *Seventhly*, A Christian is not much in the exercise of other duties that should go along with faith. Suspect that faith for presumption, that can act, and be maintained without prayer; certainly prayer keepeth in the life of faith; prayer is that grace that must act mutually with faith, in accomplishing the blessed work of sanctification. And if we prayed more, and believed more, then we should have more to speak concerning the victory over our lusts. When was it, O Christian and expectant of heaven! that you was constrained to put up an Ebenezer, and cry out, hitherto hath the Lord helped me? When was it, O Christian and expectant of heaven! that you was made to cry out, 'God hath arisen, and mine enemies are scattered before my face?' I will tell you what is your practice, ye make such a covenant with your idols, as Nahash did with the men of Jabesh-gilead, 1 Sam. xi. 2. Your lusts desire to make you pluck out your right eyes, and there is nothing your lusts will command you, but almost ye will obey: but would you send out prayers as a messenger

to tell the king of such a tyranny, ye should know better what it is to be victorious There is such a covenant between the graces of the Spirit, especially between faith and prayer, (if so we may allude) as was made between Joab and Abishai, 2 Sam. x. 11. One grace, as it were, saith to another, 'If I be weak, come over and help me; and if ye be weak, I will come and help you.' When one grace is like is to fall in battle, then another cometh and helpeth it. When faith is like to die, then prayer and experience cometh in, and sweetly helpeth faith. When love is beginning to die, and wax cold in the fight, then faith cometh in, and putteth life in love. And when patience is like to fail and be overcome, then faith cometh in and speaks this word to patience, 'Wait on God, for I shall yet praise him, for the health of his countenance.' Oftentimes our patience and our senses join together; for when sense speaketh good things, patience is in life; but when sense preacheth hard things, it is like to die, and faith must then maintain and uphold it.

The *third* thing that we shall speak as to faith's influence upon sanctification, shall be to draw these four conclusions from the point.

The *first* is, that ye may know from this the rise and origin of your little success over corruption. There are many who are troubled with this question, O! what is the ground that I get not the victory over my lusts? And they propose the question to Christ, that once the disciples proposed to him, 'Why was it that I could not cast out such a devil?' And I can give no other answer than Christ gave to them, 'it is because ye have not faith. For if ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto your idols, depart from us, and they should obey you; and, if ye had faith, there should not be a mountain in the way between you and heaven, that would not be rolled away, and become plain. And the great ground why many are groaning under the captivity of their idols, is that they are not much in the exercise of faith. Sometimes ye enter the lists with your lusts in your own strength, then ye are carried captives; and if ye do ever enter the lists, having some faith, yet ye maintain not the war if faith get but one stroke.

I will tell you six things, which if faith overcome, it keepeth the field, and maketh the Christian sing a song of triumph, even before a complete victory.

First, Faith helpeth a Christian to overcome the idol of impatience and discontent. Some never meet with a discouragement but they cry out, 'this evil is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?' They are soon put to the end of their impatience, how faith can overcome such an idol. And I will tell you three

excellent things that faith performeth to the soul under impatience, or when it is in hazard of it; 1. Faith telleth the Christian, 'there is an end, and their expectation shall not be cut off.' Faith telleth, 'there is a morning, as well as a night,' and this keepeth the soul from being overcome with discouragement, when they are brought to the mid-night of trouble, faith can tell what hour of the night it is, and how near the approaching of the morning, when day shall break and their clouds fly away 2. Faith helpeth the Christian tosee there is much in Christ, to make up any loss or disadvantage that he may meet with. If ye lose your son, or your choicest contentment in the world, faith will say as Elkanah said to Hannah, 1 Sam. i 8. 'Is not Christ better to thee than ten sons?' The choicest contentments ye can lose (that is faith's divinity) Christ is worth an hundred of them, and so this maketh the soul to be ashamed of their impatience; and to give over their fretting at the excellent and wise dispensations of God. 3. Faith letteth a Christian see, that there is not a dispensation that he meeteth with, but hath these two excellent ends; it hath our advantage as one end, and the glory of the Lord as another. And there is not a dispensation that a Christian meeteth with, but these are the glorious ends proposed. And therefore I would only give you this advice, when you meet with a dark dispensation, always let faith interpret it, for it is the best interpreter of dark dispensations; or if ye meet with sense, this is its interpretation, 'he is not chastening in love, but punishing me with the wound of an enemy;' but faith will prophesy good things to you in the darkest night.

The *second* next great idol that faith will bring low is, the idol of covetousness, and desire to the things of the world. I think that word, Eccles. iii. 1. was never so much accomplished as it is in these days, and amongst us, he hath set the world in your hearts; that is, 'the idol that dwelleth and lodgeth within you: yea, the world hath your first thoughts in the morning, and your last thoughts at night; yea more, it hath your thoughts when you are at prayer, and when you are at preaching: yea, it hath such a dominion over you, that it giveth you, as it were, a new Bible, and in all the ten commands scrapeth out the name of God, and setteth down the world. And whereas God saith, 'thou shalt have no other God but Me; the world saith, 'thou shalt have no other God but me,' &c. But faith will bring this idol low, and let you see the vanity and emptiness of it; yea, faith will let you see a more noble object, and, withal, discover unto you how short your time is, and how few hours ye have to spend in following after lies. And I am persuaded of this, that

if ye could win to shake hands with cold death every day, and say, thou at last shall be my promise, and shall be the king to whom I shall be a subject; and if ye believed that the day of eternity was approaching, it would be a mean to mortify these pursuits in the world. And I shall say, he is a blessed Christian, who can maintain always such thoughts of the world, as he shall have when he is standing upon the utmost line, between time and eternity. I shall say it, and believe, O worlding! and thou that hast the moon upon thy head, and in thy heart, that the day shall once come, when thou wilt preach as much of the vanity of the world, as those that undervalued it never so much.

The *third* great idol that faith will bring low, is the idol of self-love, and self-indulgence, which is the great mother of all other idols. I think, if there were no more to be said against the idol of self-love, and self-indulgence, than that which is in 2 Tim. iii. 2. it were sufficient; that among all the great idols of these latter times, this is put in the first place, 'they shall be lovers of themselves.' We cannot take pains for Christ, we cannot go about the exercise of any duty, because the idol of self-indulgence forbiddeth us: I will tell you the counsel and great advice it giveth you. O person, pity thyself! that same counsel Peter gave to his master, it biddeth you pity yourself; but if you could rightly interpret that language, it would be this, destroy yourself: for self-indulgence, and self-love, is that which will ruin you. O what blessed attainments of God! what blessed fruition of Jesus Christ; what advancement in mortification! what conformity to God hath that idol of self-indulgence obstructed, and utterly ruined even in the very best? I think, if once ye could set your foot upon this idol, the rest should fall apace: that is the general of all the forces of your lusts, and it is a Saul, the head higher than all the rest of your idols within you.

The *fourth* idol that faith can subdue, is self-righteousness. This is a great thing we maintain, we will never renounce our own righteousness, and submit to the righteousness of Christ. The great ground of it is, that there is this principle within us all, we love to go to heaven through a covenant of works and we never desire to be obliged to any other; we cannot submit ourselves to the righteousness of Christ.

The *fifth* great idol that faith can subdue, is that of pleasure, the world, and the attainments of it. Pleasure is the great idol that many worship and adore. There are some who love the gain of the world, and there are others that love the pleasures of the world; but faith hath a noble influence upon the bringing low such an idol; for faith discovereth to a soul more excellent pleasures, more sweet delights, than are to be found under the sun;

faith maketh a Christian lose his taste for all things that are here below; faith is the grace that maketh us grow blind; and not much to behold these passing vanities, these transient delights of a present evil world.

Our *second* conclusion is, that as faith helpeth sanctification, so sanctification helpeth faith. I will tell you three great advantages faith hath by the growth and exercise of sanctification; 1. It is a noble evidence of faith, and maketh a Christian to be persuaded that he is settled upon the rock, and that his interest in God is made sure. Sanctification is that which will help a Christian daily to read his interest in God; this is clear from James ii. 18. 'I will show thee my faith by my works.' Where this is clearly held forth, that a Christian, who is much in the work of sanctification, can upon all times give an extract of his faith, and as it were discover it, and show it to the world. 2. Sanctification maketh faith perfect, according to that remarkable word, James ii. 22. 'And by works was faith made perfect.' There is a noble perfection that redoundeth to faith through the exercise of the work of sanctification; for not only is it thereby made manifest, and receiveth such a shining lustre and splendor, as that sometimes the eyes of carnal men are even dazzled to behold a believer; but it also receiveth strength and power; faith is not of the nature of those things that spend themselves in bringing forth; but, on the contrary, if faith bring forth an hundred children (I mean works of holiness) in one day, it groweth strong; and this is further clear, 2 Pet. i. 8. 'For if these things be in you, and abound, ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful.' And from this other word, James ii. where it is said, 'that faith without works is dead, being alone.' If faith be alone, it wants its spiritual life and vigour; but if ye were much in the exercise of the work of sanctification, ye would no doubt attain to a noble and lively acting of the grace of faith. And, *lastly*, if a Christian be much in the work of sanctification, there will be a comfortable exercise of faith. Sometimes faith is exercised with much anxiety, and sometimes with much doubting; but faith and a pure conscience joined together, maketh an excellent feast, and causeth a Christian to rejoice 'with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.'

Thirdly, We may draw this conclusion, if faith have influence upon the work of sanctification, and helpeth the producing of a noble conformity to God; then, I say, there are many whose faith is a delusion, and their hope shall be cut off as a spider's web. There are some who have faith, that have not sanctification, nor knows not what it is. And shall not that faith unquestionably 'perish as a dream, and evanish as the vision of the night?' And, therefore, if ye will testify the reality of your

faith, then study more the work of sanctification. I shall, from Job viii. 14, 15. give you these eight properties of a hypocrite's faith and hope, which may make you try and examine yourself: 1. Their hope and their faith is but an act of folly; yea, there is not such an act of foolishness under heaven, as an hypocrite's hope; because it is but a castle in the air, and as writing to himself a character on the sand: so that word ye have rendered, 'whose hope shall be cut off,' is in the original, 'whose folly shall be cut off.' Showing this, that they build without a foundation, and so their faith must be most unsure and uncertain. 2. The thing they hope for shall at last loath them. O hypocrites! ye hope for enjoyment of Christ; but be persuaded of it, Christ shall eternally loath you, and ye shall eternally loath Christ: that is clear in these same words, 'whose hope shall be cut off;' or, as the words may be read, 'whose hope shall loath them.' The thing he hopeth for shall loath him, and Christ shall say, 'depart, I know you not.' 3. And though ye have now much delight and pleasure in the actings of your presumptuous hope, yet at last ye shall loath that hope. The word will carry, that not only the things ye hoped for shall loath you, but ye likewise shall loath your hope. The day is coming, that ye shall cry out, cursed be the day that ever I believed that I should get heaven. 4. It shall at last be the matter of his vexation; for these words, 'whose hope shall be cut off.' or, as they may be rendered, whose hope shall vex him.' O! when the hypocrites shall meet with that anxious, that dreadful disappointment one day, they shall then put their hand on their head, being ashamed because of their confidence. 5. He studieth by all means to keep his hope, though it be but false: therefore have ye that word in the 15th verse, 'He holdeth it fast;' or, as the words are, 'He keepeth it with hand and arm, with all his strength,' he keepeth his hope. So that if Christ would come from heaven, and say, man, thou art an hypocrite, and thy hope shall be cut off; they would say, I will keep my hope, sir, and maintain it; and that is an evidence your hope is not builded upon the foundation. I never love a faith that on this side of time is unchangeable, and never knoweth what it is to have ups or downs. 6. It is built always upon a wrong foundation, which is imported in that word, 'he shall lean upon his house;' which we suppose may be interpreted thus, 'he shall lean upon his worldly enjoyments, or upon these spiritual-like enjoyments he meets with.' The hope of a hypocrite is never built upon Christ, and so unquestionably that hope shall be cut off and evanish. 7. Let hypocrites hold fast their hope with both their arms I will say these three words unto them: *First*. If all the ministers should preach unto you, and desire you to quit your

hope, and ye will not, yet both your hope and you shall be separate; as it is in that word, 'your hope shall depart from you, and ye shall quit it.' *Secondly*, Your hope will bring you to death, and no further; according to that word, Job xviii. 14. 'whose hope shall bring him to the king of terrors.' Will it bring me no further, say you? O! no, the king of terrors shall separate you and your hope. *Thirdly*, The day is coming, when the foundations of it shall be discovered, and there shall not be a delusion that shall not be unfolded. The day is approaching, when Christ shall ask, how you got your faith, and how you maintained it. 8. The hypocrite's hope is a poor building, it is a spider's web. Which I conceive (without being critic) is this, the hope of hypocrites is spun out of their own bowels, they have it not from Christ, but as ye see a spider spin it out of its own bowels, so they do out of themselves, it is no better stuff than their own rotten righteousness; Christ never begat those unto a lively hope. Let me beseech you, therefore, that by all means ye would study to make sure your interest in God, and to build your faith on him, whose name is that *munition of rocks;* for believe it, I may say it with much confidence, I know there are many that shall once meet (if God prevent it not) with a dreadful disappointment; and, therefore, as ye would not incur that eternal hazard which is attending those who presumptuously take hold of a hope, before Christ take hold of them, study to search what your hope is. I desire not to raze any foundation of hope that is laid by the hand of Christ, but would desire and charge you to raze the foundation of that hope which you have laid from the beginning by your own hands, 'and he knew it not.' I would press these three things upon you: *First*, O! ye that are strangers to Christ, and who know not what it is to embrace the offers of the everlasting gospel, obey that excellent counsel, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. 'Give Christ your hand;' for that word which ye have rendered, 'Yield yourself unto the Lord,' is in the original, 'Give your hand unto God:' which is, in short, marry him, and be content to contract yourself to him. For believe it, the day is coming, that either that contract between you and Christ shall be certainly confirmed, or that contract between the devil and you shall be eternally ratified. And I suppose there is much spoken to the commendation of that noble Plant of renown, that ye may take Christ (if so we may speak) blindly, ye may close your eyes and take him, for he shall never disappoint your hope: for let you think of him to eternity, he shall always be above your thoughts. *Secondly*, I would earnestly desire you to search and try what was the first rise of your faith in Jesus Christ. I am persuaded, that there are many who take up

their faith at their foot, they never travail in pain, and yet faith is brought forth. Is not this a mystery? Shall it be said, 'before they travailed, they brought forth?' I do not question but there may be lesser and greater pangs of the new birth: but this is most certain, there is always some either lesser troubles or greater, till that child be brought forth: and yet I may condemn those who 'stay too long in the place of the breaking forth of children.' Christ will never refuse you when ye do really come: because ye have not been so many years and days imprisoned to the law. *Thirdly*, Let me desire you to go and ask, is there a grave between you and heaven, in all that way through which the saints have travelled, upon which this is written, "Here lieth a man "who sincerely sought life from Christ, and he denied him?" I think, without encroaching too much upon the searching forth of the exercise of the saints in heaven, I think, we may suppose, there may be in heaven some queries and interrogations. Christ shall ask O beloved! did ye want any thing here below, when ye were sent forth to travel in the world? And ye shall be constrained to answer, no. Christ shall ask this question at you, did I not all things well? And ye shall be constrained to answer, yes. Christ shall propose that question, are ye not well rewarded for all your pains? And ye shall be constrained to answer, yes. O but take him! he is the blessed and most excellent one in heaven and earth: it is the best bargain that ever ye made. O ye merchants, that have made many excellent bargains to your own apprehensions, will ye come and make an excellent bargain, yea, that will make you eternally up? And what is that? Come and buy Christ, and take him for nothing. This is not your ordinary bargaining. There are few who will come to you; and bid you buy excellent things *without money*; but come in the gospel, and ye shall get Christ *without money*. O niggards! that are loath to spend your money in the world, will ye come to Christ, and believe on him, take him freely? O! say ye, if I could get three things of Christ, I would come. *First*, I would have much gold and silver: I say, come to Christ, and ye shall get much gold and silver. Is that true? It is abundantly true: see Job xxii. 22, 25, 26. where pressing that exhortation, 'Acquaint thyself with God;' and using many arguments, he saith, 'thou shalt lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks: Is not that gold enough? Yea, ye shall have silver likewise, 'thou shalt have plenty of silver.' In the 26th verse ye shall not only have gold and silver, but ye shall have 'plenty of it;' and shall have the most excellent and refined gold. But O! say ye, what, will that promise be literally accomplished to me if I come to Christ? I would only say these three things to thee,

1. Come to Christ, and if gold and silver be for thy advantage, thou shalt have it literally accomplished 2. I say ye shall have as much contentment in Jesus Christ, as if ye had this house full of gold. 3. I will say this to thee, Christ will be thy gold and silver, according to that word in the 26 verse, which is most remarkable, yea, 'the Almighty shall be thy defence,' or as it is in the original, 'shall be thy gold,' speaking of the promise of gold before. *Secondly*, Ye say, I would have this, that what I propose might be accomplished: I say come to Christ, and ye shall have that likewise, Job xxii. 28. 'Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be accomplished unto thee;' which I conceive doth not only take in these spiritual degrees, but likewise those that relate to temporal enjoyments. But there is a *third* thing I would have, say ye, and I would come to Christ, and that is, that I might have all the desires of my heart. I say, O man! and O woman! come to Christ, and thou shalt have what thou desirest: this is clear from Psalm xxxvii. 4. 'Delight thyself in God, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart.' What can ye have, man, but it is there? Would ye have any thing of Christ? He putteth a blank in your hand, and saith that word which is said to Solomon, ask, 'what would ye have, and I shall give you.' Christ, as it were, putteth his name to the foot of a clean sheet of paper, and he desireth you to ask what ye would have: and is not this an excellent bargain? O niggard! what would ye have, which ye will not get in Christ? And be persuaded, that ye who refuse and will not take him, the eternal curse of all that is in heaven will return upon thy head, the eternal curse of all the expectants of heaven, and heirs of life will return upon the head of that person who will not take Christ. And cursed, cursed shall that person be, who will not take Christ, and one day all the congregation in heaven and earth shall say, *Amen.*

THREE SERMONS

CONCERNING THE

FAITH OF ASSURANCE.

SERMON I.

2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*

ASSURANCE is a precious gift, which many who live in these days do undervalue, and tread under foot. Do not the Christians of these times go halting between two opinions, be-

ing neither positive that they are received 'into the adoption of children:' nor yet positive that they are in a state of alienation, and 'enemies in their own mind by wicked works?' Yea, and (that which is worse) there are many among us that walk with much contentment under their uncertainty. I think it is a fault to be condemned in many, they pursue more to satisfy their sense for the present, than to have a solid well grounded assurance for the time to come. I could wish that all the debates and questions of these days, that take up so much of our time, and so much of our thoughts from better things, were happily drowned in these four excellent questions, which, without controversy, are of the greatest importance. 1. Where shall I rest all night, when the long shadows of the everlasting evening shall be stretched out upon me? And whether or not hath Christ gone to prepare a place for me in his Father's house? 2. It is a soul concerning question. 'Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? To be asking at him who can sweetly resolve you.

And 3. Not to rest there, but to be crying forth in the morning, 'what shall I do to be saved!' And to be crying out in the evening, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

4. It is sweet to be asking seriously, 'saw ye him whom my soul loveth?' There is much of our time spent in asking news from court, and from abroad, concerning the revolutions of states and kingdoms. But I suppose it were better to ask, what news from heaven concerning thyself? What news from within, and what news of thy bridegroom coming? For these are great courts, I mean the court of heaven, and the court of conscience, the affairs of which a Christian should endeavour to know.

5. It is a soul-concerning question, that a Christian should be much in proposing to himself, 'what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?'

It is certain that our faith and assurance, and all our other mercies, are from him: and yet, alas! we are negligent in praises. We may, with Tamar, rent our garments of 'divers colours,' even the 'garments of the king's daughter,' because of spiritual whoredom against God, and ingratitude to him.

Now, having spoken unto you, at so great a length, of the precious and fundamental grace of faith, we have thought fit to shut up all in speaking a little upon these words we have now read, concerning the evidence and assurance of faith.

The apostle, in this chapter, is vindicating his ministry and apostleship from the contempt that was cast upon it; he proveth he was a minister of the New Testament, called and sent of God,

by the blessing and success he had among them, in that he had not plowed nor threshed in vain, and they being so much in censuring his way, and seeking an account of his ministry in these words, he doth (as it were) draw them off by holy diversion unto another business; as if he had said unto them, "O Corinthians! "I will divert you from the exercise of judging me, and will lead "you into one that is more divine and profitable." Be much in judging and examining yourselves; and indeed it is a truth worth our observation, "That if we were more in judging of ourselves, we would be less in judging others;" but alas! there are some of us, who are so much abroad, that we cannot be much at home.

In these words there are six considerable things; *First*, That there is such a thing attainable by a Christian while he is here, as a distinct persuasion and assurance that he is in the faith, and hath an interest in Christ by being in the faith: here it is not to be understood, a being in the doctrine of faith only, but it is to be understood principally, being indeed, and really united unto Christ by faith.

Secondly, The seeking after assurance is a necessary commanded duty; for ye see here the words are very imperative, 'examine yourselves, prove your own selves.'

Thirdly, That there are many mistakes and delusions among people concerning that noble and excellent thing assurance. There are many who keep a fast hope, which Christ shall discountenance and sweep away like a 'spider's web;' and this is imported in these words, 'Examine yourselves;' or as the words may be rendered, 'take an accurate and an experimented search of yourselves, try yourselves,' or 'prove yourselves;' it is a word that is borrowed from goldsmiths refining and trying of gold: and so his putting the Corinthians to so accurate a search of themselves, saith this clearly to us, there are many mistakes concerning this thing, many do pass a decree in their own favour, before Christ hath passed his approbation of them.

Fourthly, Take notice of this from the words, that there is much, and exceeding much advantage, by trying and searching whether we be in the faith or not. This is imported in his doubling the exhortation.

Fifthly, That one most excellent and spiritual way of attaining assurance, whether we be in the faith or not, is self-examination, and putting ourselves to the trial. As if he had said, would you have a distinct persuasion that ye are in Christ? then be much in the exercise of self-examination; for the rest of the words of the verse we intend not to handle.

As to the *first*, That there is such a thing attainable, I shall

only propose these reasons unto you to make it evident, 1. It is known in scripture, that the saints of old did in an ordinary way attained to a distinct persuasion of their interest in Christ, Song vi. 3. 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' And Rom. viii. 38. 'I am persuaded, (saith the apostle) that neither death nor life, &c. shall be able to separate me from the love of God in Christ.' And 2 Cor. v. 1. 'For we know, if this our earthly tabernacle were dissolved, we have a house with God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'

2. It is the great scope of many scriptures, to show how Christians may attain unto assurance, 1 John i. 13. 'These things I write unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.' The great end and design of John's writing in these epistles, is to make a soul acquainted with Christ, and to make them accept of him, and to give them a distinct assurance that Christ hath accepted them.

3. There are many commands in scripture for Christians to be serious in searching after assurance, 2 Pet. i. 10. "Wherefore, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure."

4. It is the blessed end of God's oath in the everlasting covenant, that a Christian might get assurance. What was the great ground and end, that God confirmed his covenant with an oath? Was it not, Heb. vi. 18. "That by two immutable things, wherein it was impossible for God to lie, ye might have strong consolation?'

5. If assurance of our interest in Christ were not attainable, then these precious graces of joy and love could not be well exercised. If a Christian was constantly in the dark concerning his interest in Christ, he could not give obedience to that exhortation, 'Rejoice evermore; again, I say, rejoice.'

6. The scripture hath set down the means by which a Christian may win to assurance; as is clear, 1 John iii. 18, 19. 2 Pet. iv. 5. compared with verse 10. where the apostle Peter, pressing the doctrine of making our calling and election sure, setteth down these excellent means by which we may win to it; and doubtless, the marks and evidences that are registrate in the scripture of a gracious state, do assure us that assurance is attainable.

7. What are the ends of the sacraments, but that our assurance may be confirmed, and that our faith may be strengthened? The two sacraments are the two great seals of heaven, that are put to the charter of the covenant.

Now, as to the application, and the more full improvement of this *First* point, I shall only offer these considerations: 1. I

would have it taken notice of, that though grace and assurance be two lovers, yet there is no such bond of union between them, that the one cannot exist without the other. A Christian may have the real grace of God, and yet walk in darkness, and have no light. A Christian may be going to heaven, and yet that word oftentimes in his mouth, 'I am cut off from thy sight.' Yea, are there not even some, who have had assurance, and some times have been permitted to draw this conclusion, 'I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me,' who are now under darkness concerning their interest, and, in much bitterness of spirit, do sometimes cry out, 'my hope, and my strength is perished from the Lord?' But, therefore, let me say this one word, both to weak ones, who never had assurance, and deserted ones, who have lost it, when ye miss assurance, beware of drawing such negative conclusions concerning your graces; but when ye sit in darkness, and see no light, 'trust in the name of the Lord, and stay yourselves upon your God;' that is, when ye cannot reach the faith of assurance, be much in maintaining of adherence; remember Job's divinity, 'though thou should kill me, yet will I trust in thee;' and consider that sweet word, he will keep them in perfect peace, whose hearts are staid on him.

My *second* consideration is, that since assurance is attainable, ye would study to find out and remove those things that do hinder you from attaining it. And that we may help you in this, we conceive, that the obstructions of a Christian's assurance are especially in these two:

First, Our mistaking of the Lord's dealing towards us. And, *secondly*, Our untender and unsuitable dealing towards him. Of the *first* sort we shall lay before you these five.

The *first* is, want of favourable returns of prayer. This often maketh a Christian to debate his interest, and call in question evidences, Lam. iii. 8. compared with verse 18. 'I cry and shout, but he shutteth out my prayers;' and this is the conclusion of that dispensation, 'My hope and my strength is perished from the Lord;' and this is especially occasioned, when the Christian is most serious and fervent in prayer, and when he meeteth not with a return, this maketh them exceedingly debate their interest. And I confess, it is a sad dispensation to meet with a silent Christ in prayer; but yet, that needeth not to make a believer question all, and debate the reality of his interest in God, since the dearest of all the children of the kingdom have been so dealt with, even as David, Psalm xxii. 2. cried night and day without silence, and is not heard, but crieth out, 'Why art thou so far from helping, and from the words of my roaring?' Yea, that passage may relate to him who was 'the riot and off-spring of Da-

vid,' for even he was so dealt with, and had not presently a sensible return, when he had prayed thrice, 'that the cup might pass from me.'

Secondly, The want of sensible enlargement and liberty in prayer, that he never goeth to his knees but his heart beginneth to die within him, then he cryeth forth that word, 2 Cor. iii. 17. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; and sure, if I had the Spirit of the Lord, I would have liberty in the exercise of prayer: and that this is a rise of the disputing of our interest, is clear from Psalm xxvii. 4. compared with verse 7, 9, saith David, 'I am sore troubled, that I cannot speak. I have no liberty in prayer, I never go to God in prayer, but, as it were, my tongue sticketh to the roof of my mouth. He from hence draweth this conclusion, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious, and hath he in wrath shut up his tender mercies for ever?"

I confess, this also is a sad dispensation, to meet with an absent and vailed Christ in prayer; so that we can never go to seek God in secret, but we may write this upon our prayers, 'he is gone, he is gone:' especially when we have lost that liberty which formerly we have had; and therefore is David's perplexity much heightened, verse 5, 6. 'from his remembering his song in the night, and his calling to mind the years of ancient times; yet we may remember how soon David wrote his retractions as to that conclusion, 'I said, this is my infirmity, verse 10. And so should we do, when upon every straitening in prayer, we began to question the Lord's kindness towards us.

A *third* objection of assurance is, a Christian's wrestling with his corruptions painfully and seriously, and yet not meeting with any sensible victory over them; but, on the contrary, their corruptions seem to be stronger, and they themselves seem to be weaker, and then it is they strengthen their misbelief with that word, 1 John iii. 3. 'Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.' And indeed, this is a knot that is not easily loosed; but when he seeth idols and corruptions prevailing over him, he will cry out, 'I am gone, and their is no hope in Israel concerning this thing. And yet this also is a word in haste. Paul had registrate himself a standing witness, even after he was a chosen vessel, Rom. vii. How strangely a child of God may be borne down with a 'body of death,' even under most serious wrestling against it: and therefore if you seriously maintain that combat, though you do not sensibly prevail, thou hast no reason upon that ground to weaken thy assurance.

Fourthly, When a Christian is put to more than ordinary outward afflictions, when God dispenseth sadly unto them in out-

ward things, they then begin to call in question their interest, and dispute their assurance. This is clear by comparing Lam. iii. 18. with the preceding words, where speaking of the sad dispensations they meet with, he draweth this in verse 18. 'My hope, and my strength is perished from the Lord.' And Job ii. 4. where he draweth this conclusion from such a promise, 'I am now cast out of thy sight.' The devil taketh Eliphaz's divinity, and presents it to a Christian, 'Call now if there be any to answer thee, and to which of the saints wilt thou go?' as if he had said, did you ever know a Christian afflicted as thou art? And so he would have Job to quit his integrity. But yet we know that all these blessed ones, for all their afflictions, were dear unto the Lord, and had their interest secure in him: yea, 'as many as he loveth he doth rebuke and chasten.' And it is the bastards, and not sons, on whom he will not bestow a rod; and, therefore, we ought not to question our interest because of afflictions.

And *lastly*, The rise of a Christian's discouragement, and that which hindereth their assurance, is when their former experience of the manifestations of God doth not relish to them, and when the promises upon which they have built, become tasteless unto them as the white of an egg, and when they meet not with God in ordinances, but these become lifeless.' When these three rise together upon them, their case oftentimes becomes very perplexed. And this also seems to have been David's case. Psalm lxxvii. when he 'remembered his song in the night, and the days of old,' and yet had no sweetness in them, then he breaketh forth into those bitter complaints which are there expressed: but yet (as we said before) this was his infirmity, and there is no reason for a Christian to question his interest upon such account, because the ordinances are not at all times alike lively even to the best, and the Lord is not always present? but though sometimes the candle of the Lord doth shine upon his head, yet at other times he is necessitated to cry out, 'O that it were with me as in months past?

The *second* sort of obstructions of a Christian's assurance, I mean, such as flow from our untender dealing towards God, are,

First, A guilty conscience. That is a remarkable word, 1 Tim. iii. 9. 'Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.' It telleth us, that this excellent grace of faith cannot dwell but in a cleanly lodging, even *in a pure conscience;* and when a Christian setteth about to believe, he will know how a guilty conscience will flee in his face, and cry out, O adventure not to believe, dare thou believe? The guiltiness of a Christian's conscience maketh him oft to cry out, 'Touch not the mountain, lest thou be

thrust through.' And I will tell you three disadvantages of a guilty conscience.

1. It obstructeth a Christian's boldness in making application to Christ; his heart saith, *close*, and his necessity saith, *close;* but his guilty conscience crieth out, *O! stand back and do not close.*

2. A guilty conscience often hindereth the discoveries of Christ to the soul, and doth so affright and terrify us; yea, it will so sting and bite us, that when he revealeth himself, we cannot take notice; when he would lay on a plaister, our souls will tear it off, 'and refuse to be comforted.'

3 It doth exceedingly obstruct our going about duty: O! but our souls move slowly in the paths of God, when we are under the power of a guilty conscience.

The *second* obstruction is, that we are not much in the exercise of tenderness: O! but if a Christian were tender, and if in every step of his life he desired 'to set Christ before his eyes,' he would easily win to much assurance; according to that word, Isa. lxiv. 5. 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, and these that remember thee in thy ways.' Would ye know the assured Christian? It is the tender Christian. That Christian who doth not crucify convictions, the Christian that breaketh not resolutions, the Christian that doth not sit calls and opportunities to prayer, the Christian that saith not of any sin, 'it is a little one;' or, the Christian that searcheth always, watcheth always, examineth always, and is always casting out sin, and that is the assured Christian.

The *third* obstruction is, the want of the exercise of the grace of fear. We are not much under this disposition, to fear the Lord and his goodness. This is clear from Psalm xxv. 14. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.'

I think there are these two great evidences, that much of the power of godliness is gone from some of our hearts, 1. We fear God no more than if he were our companion. And 2. We fear ourselves no more than if we had not a deceitful heart within us; we neither fear God nor ourselves; and that speaketh, that much of the life of religion is lost amongst us.

The *fifth* thing that doth obstruct our assurance, is too much worldly-mindedness, and eager pursuit after the things of a present life. That is remarkable, 2 Cor. iv. ult. compared with 2 Cor. v. i. 'We look not into the things that are seen,' that is, we are not much taken up with the things of a present world, which the men of the world seek and delight themselves in; and it is subjoined, 'For we know, that if this our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a house not made

with hands.' So we see assurance and mortification of the world are much knit together. Would ye know where to find our hearts? The most of us are conversing with the idols of the world. Would ye know where to find our hearts? They are among the vanities of the world. O! how true is that word, Psalm xxxix. 'Man walks in a vain show?' What is man in all his actings, but as one walking in a long gallery that is adorned with pictures, gazing on these things, and saluting them all, as if they were living kings and queens, and great persons that could do him good; and so our pursuing after the world is nothing else but a *dead shadow;* pursuing after *dead shadows;* a man that is but a short living shadow, pursuing after vanity and nothing, and thus he fools away his time, forgetting to make sure 'the one thing necessary.'

5. Want of distinct apprehension of these three, 1. The infinite love of Christ. 2. The infinite power of Christ. And 3. The infinite wisdom of Christ. There is not an objection, O Christians! that ye have from the multitude of your sins, but it may be drowned in infinite love. There is not an objection that ye have from the strength of your idols, but it may be drowned in the immense ocean of the infinite power of Christ. There is not an objection that ye have from your wants, or about your evil nature, but ye may drown it in the infinite wisdom and goodness of Christ. And there can be nothing against your assurance, but which may be answered from these, if rightly applied, taken up, and rested upon by the soul.

The *last* thing which hindereth our assurance is, the smallness of the measure of grace that we have attained. When grace is small, it is hardly to be discerned; and therefore, if ye would have assurance, learn not to lye still and dispute, but rise up and increase your stock, and then ye shall know you are rich; 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God; *and by this* ye shall know, if ye follow on to know the Lord.'

The *third* consideration is, that assurance is not bestowed at all times. There are some special times and seasons when God giveth a Christian a broad sight of his interest; and I shall but name these.

The *first* time is, when he is first converted, and Christ and he joins hands together, even then sometimes the best robe is put upon the prodigal son, and the fattest calf is killed, and a ring is put upon his hand, and shoes upon his feet. Acts ix. 17. Paul met with assurance immediately after his conversion. 1 John ii. 12, 13. 'I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father;' and before that, in the 12 verse, 'I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven

you.' When a Christian is brought unto Christ, he will, as it were, lead them to the registers of heaven, and say, 'Friend, come and see, here is your name written from eternity:' but do not mistake me, I do not say this is always so, but those whom Christ converteth through the thunderings of the law, most frequently meet with intimation of the pardon of their sins, and peace with God, even at their first acquaintance. I know there are some Christians, if ye ask at them when they were begotten unto a lively hope, they would say that word, that the blind man once said, 'one thing I know, I was once blind, but now I see; but for the time and for the day, I know not when it was.'

The *second* time is, when they are wrestling with God like princes in prayer, and watching unto that exercise, Dan. ix. 23. compared with the preceding verse, he being much and serious in prayer, doth meet with that word from heaven, 'O man! greatly beloved,' or as the word is, 'O man of desires:' and Acts x. 2, 3, 4. when Cornelius was much in the exercise of watching and prayer, he seeth a vision, and getteth intimation of peace with God: and Jacob, when he was wrestling with God, Gen. xxxii. 28. hath this testimony given him, 'Thou hast as a prince wrestled with God and prevailed.'

The *third* time is, when a Christian is passing through the gates of death, and is upon the borders of eternity, I desire not to be mistaken in this neither, I know some Christians are led to heaven through a dark trance, so that they never see a blink of the countenance of Christ, until the day when they get him in their arms eternally within his Father's house. Some Christians, when they go through the gates of death, may be disputing this question, 'Where am I going? But this is certain, that sometimes, yea, oftentimes, Christ will dispense a broad sight of a Christian's interest unto him at the day of death, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. When was it that David sang that song which hath strengthened thousands in the very jaws of death, 'God hath made with me an everlasting covenant?' Was it not when death was shaking hands with him? And 2 Tim. iv. 8. when was it that Paul sang that song, 'I have fought the good fight of faith, I have finished my course, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!' Was it not even then when he was ready to depart, 'and to be offered up?' And when was it when old Simeon did sing that blessed song, Luke ii. 29. 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation?' Was it not within a step of death? He, as it were, went to heaven with Christ in his arms, or rather in his heart, he carried Christ with him, and found Christ before him; and so death to Simeon was a change of his place, and not a change of his company.

The *fourth* time is, when he is put to some hard and difficult duty Before Abraham be made to forsake his native land, and become a stranger and a wanderer, he meeteth with sweet intimations of his interest, Gen. xii. 2. 'I will make of thee a great nation;' and verse 7. 'The Lord appeared unto Abraham.' And before Jeremiah be sent a preacher unto a rebellious people, he had this word spoken unto him, 'I knew thee before thou wast brought forth.'

The *fifth* time is, when a Christian hath done some singular act of obedience. When Abraham had obeyed the Lord, and was content to offer up Isaac, he met with a sight of his interest, and the covenant was renewed to him with an oath, Gen xxii. 16, 17. 'By myself have I sworn, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thee as the stars of heaven.

The *sixth* time is, when a Christian is to meet with hard trials, difficulties, and afflictions in the world, then they usually meet with assurance; and so Gen xxviii. 14, 15, 16. before Jacob go to serve Laban, he meeteth with intimation of his peace with God.

The *seventh* time is, when a Christian is under sad persecution and affliction, then will the Lord give a word from heaven to comfort him, and assure him of his Fatherly love and mercy. When was it that Christ left that noble legacy to his disciples, John xiv. 27. 'My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you?' Was it not when he himself was to leave them to troublesome and sorrowful days in a persecuting world?

The *eighth* time is, at some solemn ordinances and approaches to God. The days of a communion to a tender Christian have been sweet days, when Christ hath come to his soul, and said, 'Behold me, behold me.' I think, the eleven apostles met with much assurance of their interest in Christ, at the communion they were at with him. O! what sweet intimations were these, 'This is my body, which is broken for you; and this cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for you?' And a little after, 'You are they which have continued with me in my temptation, and I appoint unto you a kingdom.'

We come now to the *second* point which we proposed from the words, *viz.* That as assurance is a thing which may be attained, so to seek after it is a necessary duty. Let me not be mistaken, as if I had said, the having of assurance was simply necessary to salvation; no, that was a doctrine as comfortless, upon the one hand, as the Popish doctrine of impossibility of assurance is upon the other; but the thing, I say, is, that the

Christian's seeking after assurance, and his real endeavouring to attain unto it, is a necessary command of God, which he hath bound upon the consciences of his children, among other gospel duties. And certainly, we need go no further for the clearing of this, than to the text itself; what meaneth these peremptory injunctions, 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith or not, prove your own selves, know ye not?' &c. But if ye will, ye may add that word, 2 Pet. i. 5, and 10. compared, what can be more expressly commanded, and more strongly pressed, than that Christians should use their utmost endeavours to obtain the blessed condition of assurance? 'Give all diligence; yea, give all diligence; yea, the rather give all diligence, to make your calling and election sure.'

From this we shall only lay before you these considerations, 1. If the seeking after assurance be a necessary duty; then these three things are most lamentable; *First*, that there are so many in this generation, who are so pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their iniquity. They flatter themselves with a rotten assurance, that hath no other foundation but their own imagination; they never knew, since the first day they were baptized, and did begin to profess Christ, what it was to mortify one lust, nor seriously to wrestle against one temptation, and yet they want not a strong persuasion of their interest in Christ; but ah! will ye stand in awe, lest ye meet with such a dreadful disappointment, as when ye think ye are in the very gate of heaven, even then to fall backward to the very bottom of hell; and when ye expect a kindly welcome from the Lord of glory, as one who thinks you have been in a covenant with him for many years, ye meet with this dreadful summons, 'depart from me, ye cursed, I know you not'

2. How sad may we be upon this account, that howbeit assurance be an attainable thing, and a great many dare not say they have attained it; yet so little diligence is used in pursuing after it. Is it not very lamentable, that many of you, to whom I am speaking, since first you gave up your names to Christ in a visible way, and were reputed amongst the generation of the seekers of his face, scarcely ever set a day, or an hour apart to examine whether ever indeed you were in Christ or not? Alas, is heaven of so little moment? Is the having or wanting all the enjoyments which are there of so small concernment to you that ye will not be at the pains as once to enquire after your interest in the matter? What if any of you were but possessors of a thousand pounds, and your interest or right unto it uncertain and questionable, would not your sleep depart from you, and your rest be unquiet till you had made it more secure?

What think you shall the men of this generation answer in the day of the Lord, for neglecting 'that one thing necessary;' when they have been so vexing themselves 'about many things,' and have been so serious in so many consultations to make such a worm-eaten portion in a perishing world, that the whole wit of men and angels cannot secure for one moment? It is certain, the root of all slothfulness is atheism. It is not possible that we believe as really there is a heaven, as we believe there is an earth, or that the world to come is as real as that which is present; or else it must be a strange power in the lusts that keeps us captive, that we are never suffered to think upon eternity, nor to ask where we must lodge when this cottage we carry about shall fall about our ears. O will you think upon it! how serious and pressing that command is, 2 Pet. i. 10. 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.' When the Lord saith, 'Give all diligence,' will ye give no diligence? And when he saith, 'make your calling and election sure,' will ye leave all upon uncertainty? 'I said to the foolish, deal not so foolishly.'

3. It is most lamentable, that since assurance is attainable, yet men live contentedly under the want thereof. How strange is it, that many are so seldom on their knees complaining of their uncertainty? If Christ were precious unto you, would it be so? I am sure there are some here who have had the name of Christians, I know not how long, that never had one sad thought about the want of assurance. When we look upon the desolations, devastations, and plundering in the world, how many of us can cry out, 'they have taken away my gods, and what have I more?' But when we speak of heaven, we care not who deprive us of our portion there. I will not limit the Lord, nor determine what he may do, but believe it, it is one to a thousand, if many Christians of this age have a pleasant night, and comfortable closing of their eyes, they are such undervaluers of assurance; I may fear that lamentation shall be heard upon the death-beds of many, O poor wretched wandering soul! where art thou going? And it is no wonder it come to this, when we are so long in beginning to ask this question. And now I close with this one thing, that I think, beyond all question, the souls that live contentedly under the want of assurance, are the careless daughters that dwell at ease: Christ and they are at a remarkable distance, it must be a cold winter and dark night, at best, as to their present fellowship with God.

A *second* consideration from this point is, that if the seeking after assurance be so necessary a duty, then let me beseech you to ponder with yourselves, what means are fit for you to use that ye may attain it; and if ye enquire what these means are, I shall only lay before you a few.

1. That ye would be much in the exercise of faith, I mean the direct acts of faith, whereby the sinner, from the sense and feeling of his wants, layeth hold on Jesus Christ, closing with him, and leaning upon him for a full supply out of his fulness; for indeed there are two great faults among the Lord's people. 1. Some do seek 'assurance of faith,' before ever they seek to have *faith*. 2. Some are much more taken up in debating their evidences, whether they be real or not, than they are in strengthening them; so that most of their time is spent in questioning. O! is this a real evidence of assurance? Whereas more actual believing in Christ, and gripping to the promises, and less disputing, were the shorter and surer way. That word is most clear, Eph. i. 13. 'After ye believed, ye were sealed with the Spirit of promise;' that is, ye got assurance, but not before ye believed. And ye know it is said, Matth. ix. 2. 'And when Jesus saw their faith, he said, be of good comfort; thy sins are forgiven thee.' So then it is clear, that to be much in believing, is the nearest way to assurance.

2. Ye would be much in believing the general truth and promises of the gospel, and frequently meditating on them. All assurance is, by practical syllogism, the first whereof must needs be a scripture truth; and certainly, the firm assent of that truth, and the soul's delightful meditation on it, is often blessed of the Lord, as a special mean whereby the conscience is helped to make the assumption, and also to bring forth the conclusion; for instance, we see with what strength of affection Paul acteth his faith on that word, 1 Tim. i. 15. 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners;' and presently see what followeth on it, 'of whom I am the chief;' there is his assurance, for doubtless he meant, that he was 'the chief of saved sinners.' Yea, certainly, a sinner thus exercising himself, will often find so much sweetness in the general truths, that he cannot but put to his own name.

3. Be diligent in the exercise of all spiritual graces and Christian duties. That this is amongst the best means of attaining assurance, is manifest from 2 Pet. i. 10. 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;' for indeed it is very observable, that the diligence there mentioned, is not a diligence in disputing and questioning about our election, but a diligence in the practice of duties and graces; as is clear from verse 6. 'Give all diligence (saith the apostle); whereto? In adding to your faith, virtue; to your virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance,' &c. And then verse 8. 'If ye do all these things, ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;' he doth not say, 'in the know-

ledge of the Lord Jesus Christ' simply, but, 'of our Lord Jesus;' importing, that the result of diligence in these graces shall be in the knowledge of Christ as ours, and of our interest in him. And then he addeth (upon the other hand), he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see afar off; that is, he cannot see far in any spiritual matter. and so not in the matter of his interest. O, therefore, think not that ye will get assurance by lying down with the sluggard upon your bed, or by your formal prayer, or your anxious debates; but if ever ye come to assurance, ye must be striving as in an agony; for so the word importeth, which is used to express our diligence in Christian duties.

4. As ye should be diligent, so, if ever ye would come to assurance, ye should be tender and circumspect in your walking. That is a clear word, Psalm 1. last verse. 'To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God;' and Isa. xxxii. 'The effects of righteousness is peace and assurance for ever.' Ah, the untender walk that many of us have, it is no wonder to see us walk in darkness, the gross vapours that ariseth from our conversation but engendereth clouds, which hinder us from seeing God; and certainly such pearls as assurance are not given to dogs and swine, lest they tread upon them.

SERMON II.

2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*

THERE are two great balances in which men weigh themselves, 1. There are some who weigh themselves in the balance of deceit, who think that in all their labour there is no iniquity to be found; yet God, who is the weigher of the spirit, when he shall weigh them, will engrave upon the forehead, 'Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found light.' O but there are many that approve themselves, whom Christ shall never approve: there are many that call God Father, whom he will not call children: and many that call Christ husband, whom he will not call spouse. 1. There are some who weigh themselves in the balance of the sanctuary, who, upon solid and spiritual grounds, do draw this conclusion, 'I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me;' who can with boldness and confidence look Christ in the face, and say, *thou art mine;* and with much spiritual confidence take him in their arms, and cry out, *he shall be eternally mine;* and sure there is not a more pleasant life than

to be taking him every day in our arms, and to be crying out, 'am I not made up in him? am I not made up in him?'

Before I come to the words, there are three great and most soul-concerning errors amongst the Christians of these days, which we desire you to consider; 1. There are many who are more desirous to know what they are, than what they should do: there are some who are more taken up to know whether they be justified and sanctified, than to be indeed justified and sanctified: and they are more desirous to know if they be in Christ, than indeed to be in him; and therefore we find many who spend a great deal more time disputing this question, whether am I in Christ or not, than they do in using the means by which real union and communion with him may be attained. But, oh! if you would study more to be in him, that would be the shortest way to attain the knowledge of your being in him. The *second* great error is, that some are more desirous to know what they should do, than to do what they know. Are there not many of us who have this question, 'wherewith shall I come before the Lord?' And yet we do not know his commandment is with us, that we 'should do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with our God' A *third* error is, that we are more in talking of Christ, than in believing in him, or closing with him; some of us think to win to heaven by discourses, if we can talk of Christ, we think all is without debate or controversy; but, alas! there are many who were sweet talkers of Christ, that are cursing him this day in hell. And I would only say this by the way, if there be any of you, that have win to any soul-persuasion of your interest in Christ, I entreat you, if ye can put the conclusion upon record, that in such a day of such a month, and such a year of God, you did win then to cry out, 'I am my beloved's, and he is mine;' it seemeth to have been David's practice, Psalm xvi. 2. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord." And it was Jeremiah's practice, Lam. iii. 24. 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul.' I say, ye should even mark that conclusion as they did that when temptations come, and begin to assault, you may look on your record that ye have set down, and be ashamed to misbelieve. It is true, that for a little while our assurance at best will be but ebbing and flowing; but I hope ere long we shall be above the reach of misbelief, and above the reach of fears; I hope ere long we shall dispute no more, we shall be jealous no more, we shall question our interest no more, when all our disputings and questionings shall be sweetly drowned in that infinite ocean of eternal delight and fruition of God. O expectants of heaven, expectants of heaven, are ye not looking after this day? Are ye looking

after it? I know not what we do hear, if we be not walking forward every day; he is upon his way. O to see him! we would even stand and wonder at him; I hope the day is coming when we shall never lose our hold of Christ. He is coming, he is coming; and I think, if Christ would give a pass, we would long to go hence. O! what streets are those that are there? Is there any here who are groaning for heaven? Be of good comfort, I hope ere long he shall come; he shall come, and wash away all tears from our eyes.

Now, at the last occasion, when we spake upon these words, we told you, that there were five or six things which we intended to consider in them. The *first* was, That such a thing as a distinct and well-grounded persuasion of our interest in Christ was attainable: and of this we have already spoken. The *second* thing is, That concerning the noble and excellent thing assurance, there are many mistakes among the people of God; and to make this evident, it is clear, 1. In this text, from that serious and accurate search in this matter, which the Apostle putteth these people unto; as we cleared unto you from the force of the words, and his doubting of the exhortations, "try your own selves, prove your own selves." 2. From the many commands which the Lord hath left upon record, that we should not be mistaken concerning our assurance, 1 Cor. iii. 18. 'Let no man deceive himself,' Gal. vi. 3. "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself;" and therefore doth the apostle add. 'Let every one prove his own works;' and ver. 7. 'Be not deceived.' 3. The point is clear from this, that we find in scripture many who have been mistaken most dreadfully in the matter of their assurance, Hosea viii. 2. 'Israel shall cry unto me, my God, we know thee.' And yet Israel was in a great mistake, for in the words following, ver. 3. "Israel had cast off the thing that was good." And Prov. xxx. 12. we find there a generation that were pure in their own eyes, and yet were not washed from their iniquities." 4. It is clear from this, that it is a great design of Satan, the great deceiver, that we might be mistaken about that noble and weighty point of our assurance of being in Christ. Is there not a power given unto him from Christ to deceive the nations? I may say, that in no point doth he more prevail to deceive us, than in this; if profanity kills its thousands, delusion kills ten thousands, and this delusion its twenty thousands. *Lastly*, Doth not this prove how much a Christian may be mistaken in the matter of his assurance, even that name which is given to our hearts, Jer. xvii. 9. "It is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" No doubt this may shew us, (though there were no more) how ready our

hearts are to deceive us, making us to entertain a delusion instead of truth, and embrace a shadow instead of substance.

The next thing that we have to speak to you upon this point is, to show you where these mistakes lye, and what are the false grounds by which so many deceive their own souls in this matter; and here there are two sorts of persons whom we must inform. 1. There are some, who upon most unwarrantable grounds do conclude, that their interest in Christ is sure, when indeed it is not. 2. There are some, upon the other hand, who from sad mistakes of themselves, and the Lord's dealing towards them, deny that they have an interest, when indeed they have. The first sort are the worst, and in the most dangerous condition; and they build upon these six foundations, which we beseech them to consider.

The *first* is, their supposed sensible enjoyments. Some Christians, in these times especially, do meet with some flashes of light and joy, which they have not been, it may be, acquainted with before, or at least not in such a measure, or in such a sensible manner, and upon this they presently cry forth, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.' I shall not dispute with such about the reality of their enjoyments, or how they come to know that they are such as proceed from a saving work of the Spirit of grace; but waving that, give me leave to say this much of all enjoyments and sensible manifestations, (as to the point in hand) they may be sometimes a good supporter to underprop a Christian's assurance when it tottereth, but never a good foundation whereon he may lay the first stone of that building: and therefore he is the wiser Christian, who first trieth the reality of his interest in Christ by other blessed fruits of righteousness and holiness, before he trusts the reality of sensible enjoyments, how sweet or comfortable soever they may seem to be. 2. Some build their assurance upon the number and bulk of their duties, without considering the frame of their spirit, and the principle from which they flow. They use prayer and reading, and conference; they wait upon ordinances, and are always there where the means are thought to be most powerful. And upon this they take up themselves in their own arms, blessing themselves, as that poor man, Luke xviii. 12. 'I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess;' but, alas! they do not consider, that they 'do but build their houses upon the sand,' which the first blast of a temptation will overturn; because not only all our duties, when weighed in the balance, will be found light, but when put to the trial, may be found empty, dead and lifeless things, wherein the Lord can have no pleasure.

3. Some are mistaken in the matter of their assurance, by

judging themselves by the law, not knowing or not regarding the spiritual meaning thereof. Paul was a gallant man, (in his own apprehension) when he was without the law; that is, when he knew not the spiritual meaning thereof, he thought himself the most eminent saint in all his nation; and as he sheweth us, Philip. iii. he could compare with any of them; but when the Lord opened his eyes, we see he puts himself last in the roll of saints, and first in the roll of sinners, Rom. viii. 9. 'He was alive without the law;' that is, he thought himself living and reigning above his sins; but, 'when the commandment came;' that is, when it came to his knowledge, and when he saw the spirituality of it, 'sin revived, and he died; he then saw that he had triumphed before the victory, he saw all his sins alive, and, as it were, risen from the dead, and himself a dead man, lost and undone in the estate he was in. O! how many are there amongst us in Paul's first condition? 'Alive without the law.' O! how many destroy themselves with this, they think there is not a sin forbidden in all the law of God but only ten? But, alas! thou fool, thou 'errest in this, not knowing the scripture; shouldst thou not judge thyself by the spiritual extent of the meaning of the law, and that divine commentary which the apostle James hath upon it, wherein he sheweth thee, 'That if thou be guilty of the breach of one point, thou art guilty of all?' And by that infallible exposition which Christ himself, the blessed lawgiver, hath set down, Matth. vi. whereby he discovereth adultery in the heart, and in the eye? O atheist, thou must take up the ten commandments, and subscribe guilty to them all. And let me tell you this, if ye will subscribe the law to Christ, he will subscribe the gospel to you; if thou wilt sincerely say, I am guilty, he will as sincerely say, I have pardoned, 'son, or daughter, be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee.'

Some build their assurance upon the apprehensions of their hatred to some particular sin, that albeit it was sometimes as their right hand, or their eye, yet now they can pluck it out, or cut it off. But, oh! wilt thou but consider, some sins may be made weak, and the soul (though not upon a right principle) brought to hate it, and to cry unto it, get you hence; and yet the interest of Satan may be strong in the heart.

The *fifth* mistake is, of many who judge themselves, because they go to a greater length than the former, and are kept free from all gross out-breaking sins. How many are there who go sleeping down to hell with this, "I am no drunkard, nor adul-"terer, nor murderer, nor thief, nor whore? Thus long have I liv-"ed in the town, and they were never born that can say, I have "wronged them;" and so they venture their souls upon this,

"they never committted any gross sins." I beseech you, be not deceived, remember how that wretched man spake, Luke xviii. 11. 'I am no extortioner, nor adulterer, nor even as this publican,' &c. Poor creature that he was, Christ giveth not a testimonial to every one who take it for themselves. And I must tell you, that there may be desperate atheists, without God, and without Christ in the world, who yet may be free from gross out-breaking sins I do not think, but many of those who crucified the Lord of glory, were kept from other gross sins. What knowest thou, O man, that there is more favour shown to thee, (in that thou art kept from some gross sins, when yet thou hast a desperately wicked heart.) than is shown to the devil when some links of his chain are taken in, and restraining power keeping him from his utmost bounds? God will sometimes restrain a hypocrite, or a heathen, as it was said of Abimelech; 'and God restrained him.' There may be a cord put upon thy jaws, when thou art far from having the power of conquering grace. It may also be, that all thy abstaining from outward outbreakings, proceedeth but from outward disadvantages, and not from any fear of God, or respect to him; yea, not so much as from the fear of eternal punishment. Are there not many amongst us, believe it, there are many, that take away shame, and church censure, or civil punishment, and other inconveniencies of that sort, and set a thousand hells before them, they would not be kept back from one sin, but would take their hazard of them all? Yea, is it not want of temptation, and nothing else, that hindereth many from gross out-breakings? If Satan would come but with a kindled match, there wanteth no more to set tongue and hands, and all on fire of hell. O wretched soul! do but ask thyself, "How often thou hast tempted Satan when he would not tempt thee? and now often thou hast followed a temptation, when it fled from thee? Yea, when the Lord hath hedged up thy ways, that thou could not overtake thy lovers, how many a long look hast thou sent after them? and what lustings of thy spirit within? And do ye think that heart sins are nothing, although thou had no out-breakings? What were the matter of that?" If thou had not a tongue, thou would break the third command, and 'curse God in thy heart;' if thou had not an eye, thou could commit 'adultery in thy heart;' if thou had not an hand, thou might commit 'murder in thy heart.' O therefore, build not thy assurance upon this, that thou hast made clean the out-side of the platter, when yet all filthiness is within.

The *sixth* false foundation upon which I am sure too many build their assurance is, their gifts and parts; especially upon

these two, the gift of prayer, and the gift of knowledge. But believe it, it is not much to be a Christian in tongue: but it is much to be a Christian in heart; know you not, that this will cast out many, 'we have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils!' No doubt, these had been excellent flourishes, and if the tongue would have done it, they had been highly advanced: but yet ye see these men meet with a 'depart from me, I know you not.' Ah! think upon it, he is not the best Christian, who is the best orator. Religion that is pure and undefiled, consisteth more in the affection, than in the tongue, and more in practice than in profession. I beseech you, when you cast up your evidences of assurance, consider how well you have done, and not how well you have spoken.

The *seventh* false ground whereby many do mis-judge themselves is, their supposed peace of conscience. O! saith one, "My "conscience doth not charge me with any thing, I thank God, "I have a quiet mind, and nothing troubles me." But, ah! poor wretch, wilt thou tell me, may not the strong man be within, and therefore all is at peace? A dumb conscience, and a seared conscience, is a dreadful plague. Knowest thou not that many say, 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine own heart? And because they say so, the Lord shall not spare them, but all the curses in his book shall lye upon them.

The *eighth* false ground is, the approbation of other Christians; so that if they have the approbation of some such exercised Christians, or if they have the approbation of such a minister, that is enough to silence their disputings. O! cursed be the person that putteth his trust in men, who are liars. O man, or woman, let me assure you of this, if ye had a testimonial to present to Christ, subscribed by every Christian that ever ye were acquainted with, this will be enough for Christ to reject you, and it both, 'I know you not, and therefore depart from me.' There is an emphasis in that word, 'I know you not:' as if he had said, 'It is not much though all other know you, if I know you not.'

The *ninth* false ground is, their diligent observing ordinances: their going to preachings, and to communions, and running to and fro, pretending this end, 'that knowledge may be increased.' But know there are many who have sat at a table with Christ here, that shall never sit down with him at the higher table hereafter. Are there not many who shall say unto Christ in the great day, 'have we not eaten and drunken in thy presence,' unto whom Christ shall say, 'depart from me, I know you not.'

The *tenth* false foundation, which is the strong delusion of

atheists, of which, no doubt, there are many here to-day, is the building of their eternal happiness upon this, I never meet with a cross, I never knew what it was to have a sad day. But to thee I shall only say, it may be thou never had a joyful day neither in all thy sinful pleasures under the sun. But let me tell thee, it is bad divinity to conclude, therefore I am in the way to heaven. It may be, it were better reasoning, (and though I will not say, yet it cometh nearer truth) I had never a cross, therefore I am going on in the way to hell. O! wilt thou but consider, what if he be heaping 'coals upon thy head, and fatting thee to the day of slaughter? What if this word be your portion, 'eat, drink, and be merry while you are here, for to-morrow thou must certainly die? What are all your pleasures? and what are all your honours? and what are all your possessions? What are they all? Are they not a bone cast unto a dog? The Lord valueth them not. What if they be the fatting of you to the day of slaughter?

Now as to those who deny that they had an interest in Christ, when indeed they have, they commonly deceive themselves, and vex their spirits upon some of these mistakes: 1. Some judge of their estate by their present state and condition; so that if they be in an evil frame, they begin and raze the foundation. To such I would only say, that every change of condition doth not speak a change of estate. A child of God may be in much darkness, and under much deadness, and yet a child of God still, Psalm lxxiii. It was an evil frame to be as a beast before God, and yet even then he kept grips, and holdeth him by the right hand. Job was often in a very evil frame, and yet he holdeth fast his integrity; and why then should thou upon that account cast away thine?

2. Christians judge of their estate by dispensations, they think every change of dispensations speaketh a change of estate; and if Christ do not smile always, we know not what it is to keep up the faith of our interest; and indeed, this is a great fault among Christians, that when they cannot read love in the beautiful face of Christ, they think it is not in his heart. What though he change his dispensations, doth that speak forth a change of thy estate? Christ cannot change his voice to us, but we think he changeth his heart; Christ cannot speak to us in the whirlwind, but we cry out 'why art thou become unto us as an enemy?' O! shall precious Christ be thus mistaken?

The *third* ground of mistake about our interest in Christ is, that we judge of our estate by what we are in ourselves, and not by what we are in Christ. When a Christian beginneth to judge and search himself, he can find nothing in himself but what is

the matter of doubting; and therefore thinks it high presumption to think himself a believer. But, O fool! can thou not look to Christ, and cry out, 'though in myself I be nothing, yet in him I am all.' O! if Christians knew to judge of themselves by what they are in Christ, and not by what they are in themselves, with one eye they might look to themselves, and cry out, 'I am undone; and with the other look to Christ, and cry out, 'there is hope in Israel concerning me;' that is, with one eye they might look to themselves, and blush; and with the other they might look to Christ, and hope: that with one eye they might look to themselves and weep; and with the other they might look to Christ and rejoice. O Christian, wilt thou always judge of thy self by what thou art in Christ, and not by what thou art in thyself; yea, I would say this to thee by the way, when thou meetest temptations that putteth thee to dispute thy interest, do but send them to Christ to get an answer, and say, O precious Christ, answer this temptation. For this is Christ's way with the soul; the law must bring us back to Christ, and Christ must send us back to the law, and deliver us over to it, not to the condemning power of it as before, but the directing and guiding power of it as a rule of holiness; so that a Christian's whole life must be a sweet and constant travelling between Christ and the law. When thou hast broken the law, flee unto Christ to take away guilt; and when thou hast closed with Christ, come running out again in his strength, to perform the law.

The *fourth* mistake is, that Christians judge of their estate by the measure of their graces, more than by the sincerity of them. Some Christians, if they find not love in such a degree, and if they find not repentance in such a degree, immediately they begin and raze the foundation, and call their enjoyments delusions, their faith presumption, and their mortification hypocrisy; but I must say this to thee, we should not only weigh our graces in the balance, but try them also by the touch-stone, for the smallest piece of gold is gold, and the least degree of faith is alike precious with what the apostle themselves had.

The *fifth* ground of mistake among Chaistians is, that they compare themselves more unto the saints, than they judge of themselves by the word. O! saith one, "If I were like David, I would believe; but I am not like David, nor Job, nor Hezekiah, and therefore there is none of the saints to which I should go; and if I should call, there is none to answer, and why then should I believe?" I would only say to thee whose objection that is, it is even David's objection, Psalm xxii. 5, 6. 'Our fathers trusted in thee.' O! they were excellent men, but what a man am I? 'a worm, and not a man; and yet he was put

from that objection, and I would say this, are ye below him? in what? I hope ye are not below David in necessity. Now, though ye be below him in grace if ye be not below him in necessity, ye have so much the more right to believe; for as we have said before, necessity giveth you a right, and the more necessity, the greater right to believe.

The *sixth* ground is, that Christians judge of their estate by Christ's part of the covenant, and not by their own: rather examining themselves by what Christ hath promised to do for them, than by what is left them to do; which thing, if it be heeded, would put an end to many of our mistakes and disputings.

Having now laid out some mistakes upon either hand, the next we would do, is to propose some considerations to press you to guard against these mistakes, especially the first.

And the *First* consideration is, that mistakes about one's interest in Christ, and assurance, is a most universal and popular evil: it is not one of a city, nor wo of a family, but many are mistaken in their interest in Christ, according to that word, Prov. xxx. 12. 'There are a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet they are not cleansed from their iniquity.' It is not one or two that are under this mistake, but it is a generation. And I suppose, there are many of us that are of this tribe and generation, Math. vii. 22. he saith, 'Many in that day shall say unto me, Lord, Lord, and have we not prophesied? and yet he shall say unto them, I know you not.' Since it is so universal a mistake, I intreat you, be much in the search of yourselves, search your ownselves. Certainly, I think, if there were but one within this church that was under this mistake, it should put us all to this, 'Master, is it I? Master, is it I?' But how much more, since there is a generation of mistakers, should it not be our exercise every day to cry out, 'is it I?'

The *second* consideration is, that as it is most universal, so also it is a most irrecoverable mistake. O! if ye mistake about your being in Christ, there is no making up of that mistake, if once ye pass the borders of time with this lie in your right-hand, 'I am in Christ,' there is no hope of recovery, eternity will cut off access to make up mistakes. I intreat you go not down to your grave with this, 'I am in Christ,' when yet Christ may say, 'I know you not.' I believe it, if ye could have a testimonial subscribed by all the hands of the most eminent and tender Christians that ye have known, that ye are indeed a saint; and if all the ministers that ever you spoke to, should praise you in the gate, and declare you to be a son and daughter of Abraham; yet when you shall bring up your testimonial to heaven, and the Father shall read it, and shall ask you, 'Where is my Son's name?' If

that be not here, it will certainly be rejected, and cast over the bar.

Thirdly, It is a soul-destroying delusion. This mistake about one's interest in Christ, is the very ruin of the immortal soul, according to that word, Isa. xliv. 20. 'A deceived heart hath led him aside.' And what is the fruit of it? 'So that he cannot deliver his soul.' And by consequence it may be said, that they destroy their soul. I believe it, there are many that go to hell in a chariot of delusion; we know some Christ guideth to heaven by the gates of hell, and letteth them not see life, till they be in sight of hell. But it is true also, there are others whom the devil guideth to hell by the very borders of heaven, he maketh them believe they are dwelling in the gates of heaven all their days, and yet at last they are thrust down to those habitations that are prepared for the devil and his angels.

Fourthly, If once a person be mistaken about their interest in Christ, they will have these three notable disadvantages attending upon them. 1. As long as he is under this mistake, he is without all reach of profiting by the ordinances; for when he heareth preaching, he will apply promises when he should apply threatenings; and, upon the other hand, applying threatenings, when he should apply promises, and so that which should be his medicine, becometh poison to him. 2. As long as he is under this mistake, it maketh him that he cannot pity, nor have compassion upon himself, that though he be the most suitable object of compassion, yet he knows not what it is to weep over his own ruin. 3. Readily all his graces are but delusions; all his good motions are but flames, and all his mortifications counterfeit, and all his tenderness is but the mother of stupidity: and therefore, I intreat you to guard against mistakes about your interest in Christ.

Fifthly, Consider that mistakes about one's interest is a most abiding and constant mistake. Believe it, if once we mistake in this, it is one to a hundred if ever we come right again. This is clear, Jer. viii. 5. 'They hold fast deceit,' they keep with their hands. And Isa. xliv. 20. 'There is a lie in their right hand;' that is, they hold the lie, and they keep it with all their power. I say, if once one be mistaken concerning their interest in Christ, it is hard to put them from it; yea, delusion is such an abiding thing, that we find Christ speaketh of it, as if it would wait upon one before the judgment-seat of Christ; and as if some would never quit their hope of heaven, till Christ pronounce that word, 'Depart from me, I know you not.' Delusion may carry us over the borders of time, and lead us into eternity.

Sixthly, There is much counterfeit religion in these days; that is, there is a painted faith, there is a painted love, there is a

painted mortification, and there is a painted tenderness. Some love shadows and pictures, and yet they do not love the very shadow of Christ; and are there not many, who think they are embracing Christ, and yet are only embracing a delusion and a fancy?

That which, *thirdly*, we would speak to from this point is, to give you some evidences by which ye may know if the assurance ye have of your being in Christ, be right or not. Believe it, there are many who draw that conclusion, 'I am in Christ,' which the devil and their own deceitful heart hath drawn, and Christ never gave consent to it. And I shall propose these seven or eight evidences of real assurance, by which ye may discern.

First, A real assurance is a purifying and sanctifying assurance. This is clear, 1 John iii. 3. 'Every man that hath this hope in him,' that is, persuaded of him that he shall come to heaven, 'will purify himself, even as he is pure.' And 2 Cor. vii. 1. 'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.'

O! when a Christian getteth Christ in his arms, he cannot but cry out, 'what have I any more to do with idols?' When he hath once gotten Christ in his arms, he will answer every temptation that he meeteth, with this, 'I am not mine own, I am bought with a price.' I cannot now dispose of myself. And if your assurance of going to heaven be not a purifying assurance, be persuaded of it, it is but the devil's pillow sewed over your arm-holes. Is it possible a person can be assured of heaven, and not study holiness? Can such a delusion as this overtake you?

Secondly, A real assurance putteth the Christian to a pressing and earnest pursuit after communion and fellowship with God. Is it possible for one to be assured, and not to be saying, 'he is sick of love?' This is clear, Song ii. 15, 17. 'My beloved is mine, and I am his;' and immediately followeth, 'Turn thou, O my beloved, and be thou like a young roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.' And it is clear, Song vii. 10, 11. 'I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me.' And what followeth upon that? he cometh and inviteth Christ, 'O come down with me to the fields, let us lodge in the villages.'

O when gave you Christ such an invitation as this? O precious Christ, let us lodge in the villages, and go down to the secret places of the field. And Psalm lxiii. 1. *My God;* there is his assurance. And immediately followeth upon that, 'early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth after thee, as in a dry and parched land, where no waters is.' There is a pressing desire after communion. But I would ask you, are there not many here who have the hope of heaven, (in their apprehension) and yet

the desire of communion with Christ was never with them? I desire to say to thee, (be who thou wilt) 'be not deceived, God is not mocked, that which thou sowest, thou shalt also reap. I think there are some of us, who would let Christ live in heaven many days without giving him one visit, if he would let us alone. But, O! if we were within sight of our interest in Christ, how often would this be our complaint, when he was absent, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him?' Or, my idol hath carried me away from him, and I know not where to find him.

Thirdly, Assurance of our being in Christ will put us to the exercise of praise. Believe it, I think this is one of the most searching evidences of assurance. There are some Christians who will be convinced for the neglect of the duty of prayer, but for the neglect of the duty of praise, they never have one conviction; and I will tell you the reason of it, prayer is a selfish grace, (so to speak) but praise is a denying grace; prayer seeketh, but praise giveth, Exod. xv. 2. 'He is my God, I will prepare him an habitation; my Father's God, and I will exalt him.' Psalm cxviii. 28. He is my God, and I will praise him; he is my God, I will exalt him.' What needeth David these repetitions, might not one serve? No, saith he, I would even spend my days in this, 'my God, my God:' and there is much of heaven in that word, *God*, and love committeth many sweet tautologies. Now, I say to thee, wast thou ever put to the heart-exercise of praise by this assurance thou hast? This is an evidence indeed: but alas! many of us cannot say it.

Fourthly, A person that liveth within sight of his interest, Christ is matchless unto him; as is clear, Song ii. 3. 'I sat down under his shadow;' there is faith and assurance of it: and what accomplisheth that? 'As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.' Christ hath not a match, saith the spouse, in his sweetness, his power, his beauty, and his usefulness is above all.

Fifthly, Real assurance is a humbling thing, the assurance of a Christian maketh him to sit low in the dust. Was not Jacob low in his own eyes, when he cried out, 'I am less than the least of all thy mercies?' What, was not David low in his own eyes when he spake that word, 'What am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' Was not Paul a low man in his own eyes, Eph. iii. 8. 'I am less than the least of all thy saints?' and when he cried out, 'I am the chief of all sinners?' The assurance that is real, will make a Christian sit down in the dust, and cry out, 'Wo is me, I am a man of polluted lips.'

Sixthly, Real assurance will make him to take much pleasure and delight in the going about of duties. That word, Psalm xl. 8. *My God*, saith he; that is his assurance; and presently he subjoineth, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God.' This he speaketh of himself, as himself, and likewise as a type of Christ, Psalm cxix. 115. 'Depart from me, ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God.' I believe the love of Christ, when it is in lively exercise, will constrain us to our duty; and therefore this proud transporting assurance in these days, that setteth men above duties and ordinances, and maketh them count the gospel, as well as the law, 'but beggarly rudiments,' and cry out to their neighbours, 'stand back, for I am holier than thou,' must needs be a delusion.

Lastly, There are these three properties of real assurance: 1. It is a begotten assurance. 2. It is a living assurance. And 3. It is a constraining assurance.

The *first* two properties of it are set down in 1 Pet. i. 3. 'He hath begotten us again unto a lively hope.' Who begat that assurance in thee? I suppose some have assurance, and it was begotten without travail: but if Christ be not the Father of thy assurance, it will evanish and pass away. And, *secondly*, it must be a living assurance. Some hearts are dead, and yet they say they have the hope of heaven. And, *thirdly*, it must be a constraining assurance, it will put the Christian to do what he commands; yea, if it were the most pleasant Isaac that we have, if he commandeth us to sacrifice it, we would put a knife to the throat of it, and be willing to offer it up.

Now, after all these evidences, I desire to have a report from you concerning your estate; what think ye of yourselves, are ye in Christ or not? I suppose if Christ should come here to-day, and put us all to the door, but only those who are in Christ, we would have a thin assembly. I confess, I wonder that that word does not make us to walk with sadness, 'many are called, but few are chosen.' Now, I ask this question at all, as in the sight of God, and as you will one day answer unto him who will be your Judge, what think ye of yourselves? is there none here that can give a present positive answer to this, are ye in Christ? I suppose, if I were to go round them that are here, and ask, Are ye in Christ? Are ye in Christ? O! I doubt much, if there should be many negative answers within the doors: we have so strong a faith, some of us, that since we were born, we never doubted it. But I think, (without condemning doubting) I may say, the faith that thou never doubted of, is too like a delusion; and the faith that thou never took pains to keep, and yet it kept itself, that too is like a delusion. But let me close with

this, be your estate what it will, search and come away. I think that is one of the greatest gospel-invitations that is in all the scriptures, Lam. iii. 40. 'Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord.' When thou hast searched, come away; for I tell thee this, there will be nothing that will commend thee to Christ so much as necessity: and I hope there is none of you but have enough of this. And I know it, if ye will not come to Christ, he will compel you to come, but it shall not be for your advantage to stay away till ye be compelled. O persons that are out of Christ, come away; O persons that are in Christ, come away. We must preach that word, come away, unto you, as long as you are here, till ye come and be 'fixed as a pillar in the house of God,' and go no more out. O study to be near him. O Christian, didst thou never think upon this, and say with thyself, oh! when shall I have immediate embraces of blessed Christ, when there shall be nothing between my heart and him? Till then, we never get Christ near enough, there is always something between him and us, till we be above the clouds. O these immediate soul-infoldings and embracings of Christ! are ye never sending a messenger to heaven, desiring a pass to go away, that ye may enjoy them? And are ye not longing for the day, when the waters of Jordan shall divide themselves, and the ransomed of the Lord shall pass through? Now, let us 'sing praises to our king, sing praises, for he hath gone up with a shout, and shall come again, sing praises to our king, sing praises.'

SERMON III.

2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.*

I THINK there are many who pass under the name of professors, that the very atheist, when he beholdeth their walk, may cry out, art thou also become like unto one of us? Are there not many here, that are in a golden dream, and in a fool's paradise, that dream they eat, and behold, when they wake, they shall be hungry? Therefore I think it is incumbent upon us, to search and examine our state and condition; profanity hath slain its thousands, but delusion and presumption hath slain their ten thousands. It was an ancient complaint of Christ, Luke xii. 57. 'And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' I am persuaded of this, there are many decrees of peace past upon earth, that are never ratified in heaven: there are many that

cry out, the bitterness of death is past, whom yet God, by the sword of his justice, shall hew in pieces before our eyes. We told you, at the last occasion that we spake upon these words, that there were six things we intended to speak from them; of the first three we have already spoken.

That which we intend to speak to at this time is, that there is much soul-advantage and spiritual gain that doth redound to the Christian by the distinct persuasion of his interest in Christ. This we gathered from Paul's doubling the command of searching and trying themselves; as if he had said, it is a business that will be so much for your advantage, that it is incumbent for you to search and try diligently. And for further clearing of the point, I shall only give these three places, Rev. ii. 17, 'I will give unto them a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.' By the *new name*, and the *white stone*, is understood assurance, and the intimation of it to the soul. This indeed is such a mercy, that I defy any to make language of it, no man knoweth it, much less can he express it, but he that is the possessor of it. And that place, Isa. lxii. 2. 'I will give them a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name?' O what a name must that be, which the mouth of the Lord shall name? I think what he giveth, must be one of the noblest names that ever was given; all the styles and titles under heaven cannot equal it. And, *thirdly*, we see David, in the eighteenth Psalm, found much sweetness and advantage in this, when nine times he hath that word, 'My strength, my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength and my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. O! David, what needeth all these *mys*? David would answer, O! he is sweet in himself, but, oh! much sweeter to me when I put to that positive note, *my*.

Now, to speak more particular to these advantages of assurance; The *first* is, That a person that is assured of his interest in Christ, he is much in desiring communion with Christ, Song i. 7. 'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, (there is his assurance) where thou feedest, where thou maketh thy flock to rest at noon?' There is desire of communion. And Song vii. 10, 11. 'I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me;' there is this assurance; and immediately followeth, 'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages;' there is her desire of communion. And Song ii. 16, 17. 'My beloved is mine, and I am his:' and what followeth upon that? 'he feedeth among the lilies, until the day break, and the shadows flee away: turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether:' that is, in short, let me have sweet correspondence and

fellowship with thee till the day of eternity shall come. I think the desires of an assured Christian are like the grave, they cry continually, 'Give, give,' and they never say, 'it is enough. What is the reason ye seek so little after fellowship with Christ? It is even this, ye are not persuaded of your interest in him. Believe it, if once ye had attained to this blessed length, as to cry out, 'Christ is mine, it would be a hell upon earth for you to live at such a distance from him, as you do for the most part. O! but assurance maketh absence from Christ an unsupportable burden, Psalm xxii. 1. 'My God, my God;' there is assurance; and immediately followeth this complaint, 'why hidest thou thyself from me?' Song iii. 1, 2, 3. that word, 'Him whom my soul loveth,' made her to weep so much under absence from Christ. And John xx. 13. when the angel asked the question at Mary, 'Woman, why weepest thou? I think she thought it a needless question, and she tells the cause of it, 'they have taken away my Lord:' I think her heart was at her mouth, when she pronounced these two words, *my Lord*, she spake them with a great deal of emphasis and force. Could ye resent absence from Christ so little, if ye were sure he was yours? I confess it is no wonder, when persons lose that which is not their own, that they weep not much for the loss of it: but, oh! to lose that which is our own, maketh it a cross and a burden to us.

Secondly, It maketh the soul to have a high and matchless esteem of precious Christ, Song v. 10. "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." O! saith the spouse, I never saw his like, and I shall never see his like again: there is much in that, *my*; interest maketh her look upon Christ with another eye nor she would have done; strangers look upon him as a tree planted upon the sand, 1 Pet. ii. 7. 'To you that believe, Christ is precious,' not every one. And Song ii. 3. 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight;' the reason is, interest in the words going before, 'As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.' Yea, assurance will make every thing in Christ exceeding pleasant to the soul; as is clear, Song v. 6. 'My beloved is altogether lovely;' or 'he is all desires.' I tell you what assurance will do, it will make Christ's person pleasant and precious to the soul, it will make Christ's natures pleasant to the soul, it will make Christ's offices pleasant to the soul, and it will make Christ's promises pleasant to the soul, it will make threatenings pleasant to the soul, it will make the smell of Christ's garments pleasant to the soul, and it will make the kisses of his mouth pleasant to the soul. O! saith the assured Christian, there is nothing in Christ but is most pleasant, and is all desires: his threatenings are pleasant, they are the wounds

of a friend; and his kisses are pleasant, they are better than wine; his name is pleasant, 'it is as precious ointment poured forth,' his smilings are most delightful, 'Whose countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars:' O to embrace a married Christ! how pleasant is it to the soul? What maketh you have so low thoughts of Christ? Even this, the want of assurance that he is your husband.

Thirdly, Assurance will make the Christian patiently submit to every cross and sad dispensation he meeteth with. This is clear, Heb. x. 34. 'They took with joy the spoiling of their goods.' And what made them do so? 'they hoped for a better inheritance, and a more enduring substance.' I tell you assurance will answer all crosses with this, *Christ is mine*; when they are afflicted, assurance will lift up its voice and cry out, *Christ is mine*; and when they are reproached, they will comfort themselves with this, 'Christ is mine; I can put on the Lord Jesus.'

Fourthly, Assurance will keep you from apostacy and defection from Christ, 2 Pet. i. 10. 'Make your calling and election sure; and if ye do this (saith he) ye shall never fall,' Heb. iii. 12. It is there set down as a fault of the evil heart of *misbelief*, it maketh us 'depart from the living God:' but, on the contrary, assurance knitteth the soul to Christ by a threefold cord, which is not easily broken. Believe it, the assured Christian can cry out with much confidence of faith, 'my mountain standeth strong, I shall never be moved.' The assured Christian can cry out with much chearfulness, 'In God will I praise his word, in God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid what flesh can do unto me.' Yea, he can sweetly sing in the very mouth of danger, 'The Lord is my light, and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?' Psalm xxvii. 1.

Fifthly, Assurance keepeth all the graces of the Spirit green and flourishing, it is a refreshful dew upon our branches, which maketh every grace sweetly to blossom in its season. 1. It stirreth up the exercise of love. O! how vigorous are the actings of love, when a Christian can cry out, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his!' Song ii. 16. 'My beloved (there is here assurance), he is a bundle of myrrh, and shall lie all night betwixt my breasts,' Song i. 13. That is as long as time shall last, I shall never have Christ out of my heart; there is love, 1 John iv. 19. 'We loved him, because he first loved us:' our hearts are naturally cold, but love kindled love. The sense of his love to us, putteth our hearts into a heavenly flame towards him again. 1. Assurance keeps up the exercise of prayer; it is the assured Christian that can pray best, and to the best advantage: and in these three things especially is prayer helped by assurance. 1. It helpeth in

the point of boldness; O, but the assured Christian can go boldly to the throne of grace, crying, 'Abba Father, and my Lord, and my God.' 2. It helpeth our diligence in prayer, Psalm lxiii. 1. 'O my God,' here is assurance, 'early will I seek thee,' there is his diligence as the fruit thereof. 3. It helpeth the fervency of prayer, as in that same place, 'My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee;' there is fervency as another fruit of his assurance. 4. Assurance keepeth in exercise and life the grace of mortification, as is clear by comparing 2 Cor. iv. 18. with 2 Cor. v. 1. 'We look not at the things which are seen: O Paul! what aileth you, may ye not take a look of the world? O! saith Paul, and would you know the ground of it? 'We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?' my house and my treasure is in heaven: I must have my heart there, and mine eyes also. Would you know what would stay your pursuit after the world? Study to have the assurance of your interest in Christ continually with you. And 5. It keepeth in exercise the grace of humility. There is nothing will keep Christians so humble as assurance, Gal. ii. 20. 'I live; yet not I. but Christ liveth in me.' Eph. iii. 8. There he is all in exalting grace, and debasing himself. It is the misbeliever and discouraged person, that dwelleth nearest pride. Believe it, misbelief is big with child of pride and apostacy; these are two children which that fruitful mother will bring forth. And 6. It will help the grace of repentance. Would you know what would make the Christian to repent? It is even this, to take Christ in our arms and call him ours. Zech. xii. 10. 'They shall look upon him; (that is their faith), and they shall mourn, as one mourneth for his only son.' I think it is known by experience, the soul never weeps more tenderly under the conviction of sin, than when he hath Christ in his arms, and can say, *he is mine;* O! how sweetly do they then complain? There is not a sight of Christ as their own, when they have offended, but it breaks their heart in pieces; and it is as a sword piercing into the bones, when they cry out O what a fool was I to offend such a precious one, in whom I had so much interest? Was it not a sense of interest, that made Mary wash the feet of Christ with her tears? *Lastly*, It will keep in exercise the grace of joy, 1 Pet. i. 8. It is faith which maketh one to rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Would ye know why your graces are withered? Would you know why all the pleasant plants of God within your soul are decayed? It is this, ye live without sight of your interest in Christ. Believe it, (if so I may speak) assurance will be a watering to your graces every morning, and refresh them every hour; it being a channel through which divine

influence is conveyed to the increase of grace, and especially of joy.

The *sixth* advantage that cometh unto the Christian by the assurance of his interest in Christ is, that it maketh death pleasant and comfortable unto the soul. What maketh death *the king of terrors?* and what maketh it so to us? Is it not this, we go to heaven under a cloud? The assured Christian can take death in his arms, and cry out, welcome, O friend! The assured Christian, when he seeth the chariots his Father sends for him, doth with old Jacob rejoice. And Psalm xxiii. 4. 'When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.' What brought you that length, David? I will tell you why, saith he, *for God is with me.* I think I need not fear any thing when I have God in my company. It is the assured Christian that can cry out, 'Why should I fear death?' Should I not laugh at destruction? I think, indeed, the assured Christian needeth not fear death, because death to him is the death of all his lusts, the funeral of all his sorrows. And is not the day of death, his coronation-day, his marriage-day, the day of his triumph, and of his entering unto rest; and why then should he fear it.

The *seventh* advantage is, that a Christian's being in the state of assurance, can put the highest account upon the smallest mercy that he meets with from God. The assured Christian looketh upon every mercy as a wonder: it is the assured Christian that crieth out 'I am less than the least of all thy mercies:' there is not a mercy he meeteth with, were it but a drop of cold water, but if he can read this on it, that it came from my husband, and from my Father, it will be better to him than the sweetest wine.

Lastly, Assurance doth exceedingly help us to cheerfulness in obedience. O that is a remarkable connection that Paul hath Acts xxvii. 23. 'The Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve.' That passage also, 2 Cor. v. 14. is very observable, 'The love of Christ constraineth us,' &c. Why art thou so painful a minister, Paul? Why? knowest thou no man after the flesh, are not led by carnal interests nor affections? Art so busy and diligent, as all the world counteth thee mad: Why? saith he, love will not let me rest; if I would be lazy, or carnal, or fold my hands to sleep, the love of Christ doth always sound that in my ears, 'That I was dead, and he hath died for me, that henceforth I should not live unto myself, but unto him that died for me. Now unto him who is the first, and the last, who was dead, and is alive for evermore,' we give praise.

DIRECTIONS AND INSTIGATIONS

TO THE DUTY OF

PRAYER.

SERMON I.

1 Thess. v. 17. *Pray without ceasing.*

GODLINESS is so sublime and divine a thing, and doth so highly elevate the believer who is endued with it, that by it he is admitted unto that high pinnacle of honour, and inconceivable pitch of dignity, as to be made like unto God, and to have a glorious participation of his divine nature; so that we need not much rhetoric to commend this unto you, who have tasted of the sweetness of it; 'for wisdom will be justified of her children,' Matth. xi. 19. But there are some of you who savour not the things of God, and to whom these things do appear but as some Utopian fancy, and notions of a man's brain, who are not much in contemplation of these things. So that though we could speak upon this subject, in such a manner, as that the glorious light of it should surround us, yet the blind heart cannot see it, because there is a dungeon within; and till Christ open our eyes, (as well as reveal his light) we cannot be enlightened by it. But had we once as much divine understanding, as to take it up in its beauty and necessity, in its advantage and dignities, in its comeliness and equity we should esteem it the principal thing which we have to do in all our lifetime, and should 'dig for it, as for hid treasure,' Prov. ii. 4. And there is no part of this royal and beautiful ornament of godliness, but it may commend and ingratiate itself to any who do not close their eyes. And amongst all the beautiful effects and parts of godliness, this duty and grace of prayer is not the least, and doth not a little commend it, and though it appear sometimes little among the thousands of the graces of the Spirit yet out of it have come excellent things, and it hath not counted it presumption to compare itself with the highest and chiefest. It is that (no doubt) by which a soul is elevated to converse and talk with God, with the holy and blessed Trinity; yea, and that as often and freely as the Christian pleaseth: for there is a door of access standing always open, by which we may enter in and communicate and impart our thoughts to God, and to have him

making known his mind to us. O this is a dignity and a privilege that hath been purchased unto us at an infinite rate and value, even the precious blood of Christ; for, no doubt, the door of our access unto God is through the vail of his flesh: and were this more deeply engraven upon our spirits, we should improve this dignity more; did we once believe the unspeakable highness of this duty of prayer, and the incomprehensible essence of God, that which we now neglect through ignorance, we should fear to meddle with it through a sort of reverence and fear, being "afraid to touch the mount, lest we should be shot through," and looking upon ourselves as unworthy to lift up our eyes to heaven, because we have reproached him so often.

Now there are these two comprehensible and cardinal evils, which do exceedingly mar and intercept the obedience of Christians unto this great and precious command of 'praying without ceasing,' and they are these two, atheism and idolatry; too much confidence in ourselves, and too much leaning to our own understanding which is idolatry, it being a visible breach of the first command, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me, Exod. xx. 3. And too little confidence and trusting in God, which is our atheism, employing ourselves in all, and employing God in nothing: so that our blessed Lord may propose that unanswerable challenge and question to many of us, 'Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name?' John xvi. 24. And what is this practice, but involving of ourselves in that woful curse, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the Lord; should the living seek the dead and not their God? who giveth to men all things liberally to enjoy," Jer. xvii. 5. Were we dwelling more under the spiritual impression of our inability and impotency to save ourselves, and that complete ability and infinite power which is in him to help us, we would bind this precious command of prayer, as a chain of gold about our neck, and make it 'an ornament of grace to our head,' Prov. iv. 9. We should certainly be constrained to cry forth, "All that the Lord hath commanded us, we will do," Deut. v. 27. And pray that there may be such a heart given to us, as to have our practice correspondent unto our resolutions.

O! what a glorious and unspeakable dignity suppose you it to be, to be daily having your walk in heaven, in those 'beautiful streets that are all paved with transparent gold;' and to be conversing with him, whose fellowship is of more infinite worth than all imperial dignities. A Christian who is much exercised in prayer, may have this to say when he is passing through the gates of death to long and endless eternity, that he is now to change his place, but not his company; heaven to him is

but a blessed transition to a more constant and immediate enjoyment of God. O what a blessed day, suppose ye it to be, when ye shall be altogether without the reach of the necessity of this duty, and whole exercise of the grace of prayer? For though it be a blessed and most divine exercise, yet it involves an imperfection in its bosom; and so it must needs pass away, 'when that which is perfect shall come,' 1 Cor. xiii. 10. O to be much in correspondence with him, and in maintaining communion and fellowship with him! "Ask of him although it were to the half of his kingdom; 'yea more,' Whatsoever ye ask in his name, according to his will, and what he sees fit in his wisdom for your good, believing, he will grant it you," Matth. xxi. 22. and will not deny you. We conceive, there is not such a comprehensive promise annexed to any duty as this; in a manner, it is the sweet compend and epitome of all Christian promises. What is included here? All things for your good are here included, and nothing of that kind excluded. We confess, if our enjoyments were regulated according to our desires, they should come far short of that which we stand in need of, and much more would they come short of that which he is willing to give: and therefore we are blessed in this, that he walketh not in dispensations to us by the rule of our desires, but by that precious rule of his free and condescending grace; for he is able to give unto us 'exceeding abundantly above all that we are able to ask or think,' Eph. iii. O if ye would ask, what is the great and eminent exercise which a Christian ought to have while he is here below? Believe it, I could give no answer so suitable, as prayer. And if it were asked, *secondly*, What ought to be the great and eminent exercise of a Christian while he is here? It is prayer. 'Pray above all things, and above all things prayer,' I mean, true, serious, sincere, and not hypocritical prayer; a pleasant retiring and diverting ourselves from all other things, to wrestle with God; to leave our servants and our asses at the foot of the mount, until we go up and worship God, and bury our idols under the vale of Shechem; and to wash ourselves from our pollutions, when we go up to Bethel; to return from the confused noise of the multitude of our affairs, unto the pleasant delighting ourselves in God. A Christian (the sound of whose feet is much heard in the streets of the new Jerusalem, who in a manner, is anticipating the time of his endless enjoyment of it; and who is daily bringing down heaven unto earth, or rather elevating himself towards heaven, hearing of such an endless command as this, 'Pray without ceasing,' Rom. xii. 12.) is constrained to cry forth, "Lord, what is man that thou should be mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou should visit him, and that thou hast

so highly magnified him?" Psalm viii. 4. I conceive if a Christian would look upon all the duties of religion under a right notion and apprehension, certainly he will rather take them up as his dignity, than his duty, and rather as the singular tokens and significations of the infinite respect and love of God towards him, than any ways given and commanded him. Seeing by the practice of them, we shall testify our thankfulness and obedience towards him; surely it were our servitude, and not our liberty, to be freed from this blessed and glorious work of his commandments. O what a bondage were it for an immortal soul, not always to be living in a direct line of subordination to him? But a natural man, hearing of this decree and command of God coming forth, 'Pray without ceasing,' will cry out, 'This is a hard saying, who can hear it!' John vi. 60. We ought to study to be subordinate to God, and in subjection unto nothing which may hinder our subordination unto him: and he who counts the service of the Lord a weariness, and doth snuff at it, as it were, and who never knew what it was to be bound in the spirit, till he go to prayer; believe me, that man is not much taken up in the obedience of this noble and most excellent commandment, 'Pray without ceasing.'

Now being come to the words: having spoken at large of that radical and noble grace of faith, we are come to speak of this excellent grace of prayer, and I would have none of you mistake the nature of this command or excellent grace: or to conceive that the apostle doth here so abridge Christian duties, as to confine them within this one duty and grace of prayer, so that we should constantly be taken up with this exercise, and so neglect all other duties. No, surely this is not the meaning, for the words going before the text may remove this mistake, 'Rejoice evermore,' 1 Thess. v. 16. But we conceive it holds out these things to us:

First, That in all our lawful diversions and interruptions from this divine exercise and employment in this noble duty and grace of prayer, we may be keeping ourselves in a praying frame and disposition, so that, when occasion presents itself to us, we may retire from the noise of our secular affairs, and converse with him; a practice unknown to the most part of the Christians of this generation, who, betwixt the time of their conversing with God, and their address to his throne, gives leave to wander after many vain impertinences, and to rove abroad in the path of their idols, and to entangle themselves with the affairs of this world; so that (in a manner) they are incapacited for this holy and divine exercise of the duty of prayer, which doth require much divine abstractness from the world, and the

things thereof, and much composedness of spirit, which our involving of ourselves too much in our affairs (that do but by the way belong to us) doth so much interrupt and hinder us; and this observation, 'Pray without ceasing,' holds forth unto us, that there is no condition, nor estate of life wherein we can be placed, that exempteth us from the necessity and obedience of being much in the exercise of this noble and excellent duty of the grace of prayer. For if we be under bonds, we must pray that we may be enlarged; and if he lift up the light of his countenance upon us, we must pray that we may be helped to walk humbly with God, and to erect to ourselves a dwelling in the dust, when he erecteth to us a throne in heaven, and to be enabled not to stir him up, nor awake him before he please. God hath, in the depth of his infinite wisdom and unsearchable love towards man, so ordered it, that continual dependence upon him is both our duty and dignity.

And then, *secondly*, It holds out this unto us, that in the midst of all our business, and other affairs that we go about, we ought to be sending forth secret and divine ejaculations toward God. This practice was no mystery unto Jacob, for in the midst of his testament, having blessed six of his sons, and having other six to bless, he breaks forth with that divine thought, 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord,' Gen. xlix. 18. Neither was this a mystery unto godly Nehemiah, who, while he was standing before the king, with the cup in his hand, did pray unto the Lord in his secret and silent way, Neh. ii. 4. 'He prayeth unto the God of heaven.'

And then, *lastly*, This command and exhortation, 'Pray without ceasing,' holds forth this unto us, that we should lay hold, yea more, that we should watch to lay hold upon every opportunity for this duty of prayer; yea more, that we should labour upon all occasions to enjoy this admirable dignity, which is the scope of that noble command, 1 Pet. iv. 7. "But (saith he) the end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." A practice, alas! that is not now much in request, and that the Christians in this generation do very much undervalue and set at nought. We conceive, that which so much interrupts our obedience unto this command of praying in public, and in praying one with another, is either our atheism, or our pride; we being more afraid to speak before men, than to speak before God, which is our atheism; so that our silence is rather from our reverence of men, than from our reverence of God. And then our pride hinders us from it, we being afraid, lest going about that duty, we discover our nakedness, and make our shame appear; and in our impertinent de-

nials of our obedience unto this desire, we study to cover the matter with a pretext of humility, and to gain reputation amongst men, that pride is hid from our eyes, and that we will walk low, when in the mean time we sit on high places: and certainly, that which doth so much obstruct our liberty, and our having access unto God in our praying one with another, is our greater fear of those before whom we pray, than of him whom we pray to: and, no doubt the divine impression of a Deity upon our hearts, would make us overcome this. Or it is our pride that hinders us from high thoughts of God, and hinders and interrupts this holy and divine exercise of the grace of prayer, even ourselves: which is the great Dianathat we so much adore, and about the adorning of which, and her silver shrines, (to speak so) much of our talk and labour is spent: we still proposing that woful end in all our actions, the exalting of ourself, and attaining reputation amongst men: and therefore it comes to pass, that there is little or no advantage redounding to us by the exercise of public prayer: so that we may say that which one spake to another purpose, *Cum inter homines fui minor homo redivi*, for we may say this that when we have been amongst Christians, we do oftentimes return less Christians; for if in our praying one with another, we be answered according to the idols of our heart, and have liberty of words, and perhaps some real access to the throne of grace, when God lifts up, we lift up ourselves 'being exalted above measure, and sacrificing to our own net, and making a secret feast to our dagon, within the temple of our hearts, proving ourselves to be but empty 'vines, bringing forth fruits unto ourselves,' Hosea x. 1. And hence it is, if a Christian will observe it, that he doth not advance much in the work of mortification by his public enlargements, and that the power of iniquity in him is not much restrained by them but presently after his weeping over himself for some short coming, some new temptation presenting itself, involves him in the like, or, it may be in a worse sin: and ordinarily our public enjoyment and enlargements are not constant and permanent from our quenching his Holy Spirit. However, by the way, we would say that which a Heathen said, "It is much for a man to be as serious alone in the exercise of his mind and affection, in pursuing after these duties, as when he is in company:" and that which exceedingly hinders a man's obedience when he is alone unto this command, 'Pray without ceasing,' is either the want of a solid conviction of the necessity of this duty, or else it flows from not being convinced of the advantage that may be found in this exercise of our secret retirements with God, and abstracting ourselves from the noise

of the world to converse with him. What joy in the Holy Ghost? What mortification of our idols? What divine conformity and likeness of the Lord's blessed and glorious image might we attain to by this? As likewise, we may superadd this, the want of the solid conviction of those unspeakable disadvantages that are to be found in our woful neglecting and sinful suspending of the exercise of this duty when we are alone, which are best known to those who are most conversant with their own spirits: but sure we are, 'Through the slothfulness of our hands, our houses droppeth through, and our building doth decay;' and we are become remarkable servants unto our lust and corruptions.

Now is there any of you that, at the very reading of these words, 'Pray without ceasing,' may not retire himself, and judge himself eminently guilty of the breach of this commandment and excellent duty? That whereas Eliphaz did accuse Job, 'Thou restrainest prayer before God,' Job xv. 4. Surely he may justly charge it upon many; yea, alas! upon most of the Christians of this generation. There are many, here I fear, who do pass under the notion of saints and real Christians, who did never much study to obey this command; there are many here who need not much arithmetic to calculate all the prayers that they have poured out before his throne. O! whither is your devotion gone? If David and Daniel were now alive, would not their practice condemn the Christians of this generation, who morning, at noon, and at even-tide, did call upon him, yea, in the silent watches of the night, and at midnight did rise, 'and seek their Maker, who gives unto his own their songs in the saddest nights of their affliction?' We conceive, also if Anna, that precious woman, were now alive, to whom that excellent testimony is given, Luke. ii. 57. "She was a widow about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and praying, night and day;" might she not provoke many women, yea, and all men and women, unto an holy emulation in this so singular and divine a practice? Alas! there are none now-a-days upon whom so brave a testimony could be passed as upon her. We may either conceive, that the way to heaven is more easy than it was in ancient times, or else that there is not so much delight and solace to be had in him as was before; were we daily tasting of 'that pure river of life that flows out from beneath the throne of God,' and of its sweetness, 'which causeth the lips of those that are asleep speak;' we would be more taken up in giving obedience unto this precious command of prayer; and if we were sleeping more in the bed of love, we would be less sleeping in the bed of security; we would likewise embrace more abstractedness from

the world, and more familiarity with God. O! but our visits are rare, because we are not constant in prayer, and fervent in spirit, seeking the Lord. It is no wonder that we forget what an one he is, because it is long since we did behold him, we may forget his form and lovliness, there is such a number of days and woful space of time intervening betwixt our enjoyment of him.

Now we shall not dwell long in pointing out unto you what prayer is; we conceive, it is a sweet travelling and trafficking of the soul betwixt emptiness and fulness, betwixt our inability to help ourselves, and his ability to help us; the one deep calling unto the other deep; or, in short, it is a soul's conference with God.

Neither shall we stand in proving this unto you, that it is the duty of a Christian to be much engaged in the exercise of prayer. The text doth sufficiently prove it; but we shall only for the clearing up of this, point out one place of scripture, and that is in Eph. vi. 18. where we are exhorted to 'pray with all manner of prayer and supplication, &c.' Which we conceive to be understood both of public and private prayer, and that we should not be in the exercise of these by starts and fits, but that we should continue in them with all perseverance, as the text doth clearly hold forth.

Neither shall we insist long in speaking unto this, what is the spirit of prayer; we conceive, it doth not stand in that promptness and volubility of language that we use before him, for there may be much of that, and little of the Spirit; and, upon the contrary, there may be little of that or nothing at all, and yet much of the Spirit; yea, we are certain, that the Spirit is sometimes an impediment unto much language; for either in our presenting or expressing our grief before God, our spirits are so overwhelmed within us, and so troubled, that we cannot speak, so that sighs or silent groans are rather our oratory, than the multitude of words: so likewise in the exercise of joy, the soul is so filled, and in a manner overshadowed with the Holy Ghost, that the Christian is wrapt up in holy admiration and astonishment, so that in a manner he loses not only the exercise of invention but also the exercise of speech: he is so much taken up in gazing at that which he doth enjoy and in beholding and contemplating him who hath ravished him with one of his eyes, and with one chain of his neck, so that he can speak no more, but beginneth to wonder, his tongue cleaveth to the roof of his mouth, and his judgment is confounded with the inexpressible sweetness and glory of him that appeareth, and his affection doth so swell and run over all its banks, that (in a manner (he is clothed with a blessed impossibility to have the use of

his tongue, and therefore he begins to admire that which he cannot speak: however, he that 'hath much of these things, hath nothing over, and he that hath little, hath no lack.'

Neither doth the spirit of prayer consist in the fineness and eloquence of our dictions, these things being rather to prove ourselves orators than such as pray in the Holy Ghost.

But we conceive, it doth more consist in the voice of the affection than the voice of words, and having unexpressible and unutterable sighs and groans of the spirit, which is indeed that true spirit of adoption, which he hath given unto us, whereby we cry unto him 'Abba Father,' Gal. iv. 6. If we speak no more in prayer, than what our affections and soul speaketh, truly we would not speak much: if we speak more with zeal and affection, the vain prolixity that we have in the duty of prayer, would be much compendized and abridged. Neither shall we speak long on this, how much it is of a Christian's concernment to be convinced of the absolute necessity of a Mediator, and of a Days-man, that must lay his hand upon us in all our approaches to God. And truly we conceive, if many of you were posed, when last the deep impression of the need that you have of Jesus Christ; and of him that hath taken that glorious title and attribute unto himself, of being the Counsellor, Isa. ix. 6. were engraven upon your spirits, when ye went to prayer, you should find it a difficulty to fall upon the number of the days; and I conceive that the want of the apprehensions and uptakings of God, and of ourselves, is the reason why this great mystery, and divine duty of the gospel, viz. the employing of Jesus Christ in prayer, is so great a mystery both unto our judgments and affections. However know, that this is a duty belonging both to our knowledge and practice. There are many Christians, who, to their own apprehensions, have made great progress in the course of Christianity, who yet may turn back, and learn that great and fundamental lesson, to call on his name. Sure we are, were this more believed, that 'God is a consuming fire' without Jesus Christ, we should not be so presumptuously bold as to approach before God, either in public or in private, without him, who by his blood must quench this divine flame, and who must remove the angel that stands with the flaming sword in his hand, marring our access to God, Christ must be to us 'Melchisedec, a king of righteousness and of peace.'

He, no doubt, is that tristing place in which God and sinners must meet; he is that glorious ladder that reaches from heaven to earth, by which we must ascend up to God; his humanity (which is the foot of the ladder) is the door of our access by which we must ascend up to the top, which is his divinity; we

did once by our iniquity fix a gulf betwixt God and us; but Jesus Christ, by taking on our nature, did make a golden bridge over that gulf, by which we may go over and converse with God.

And *first*, Surely the want of this conviction doth make us come with less confidence unto him, for upon what can ye build your hope, except it be upon that 'stone of Israel, and in his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased?' Matth. iii. 17. We ought to rest upon him, who is 'Immanuel, God with us.'

2. The want of this is the cause of the little reverence that you have to God in your approaches unto him; for did we once take him up under this notion, how inaccessible God is except he be made accessible by him, who 'is the way, the truth, and the life,' John xiv. 6. O! how would we fear to draw near to such a holy God.

3. And this likewise is the occasion of the little delight; we have in conversing with him, we are persuaded that there is no delight in this blessed exercise, but through him who is the *vision of peace* betwixt the Father and us; his divine nature is an impregnable rock, which we cannot scale but by his human nature, and we must make use of Christ in all our approaches to God, not only as one who must give us access unto him, and open a door unto us, through which we must enter into the holiest of all, (he must draw aside the vail that is hanging over his face, and we must go in walking at his back; as is clear, Rom. v. 2.) but we must likewise make use of Christ in all our approaches unto God, as one by whom we must be enabled to do every thing he calleth for at our hands. If the faith of that saying, which is in John xv. 5. 'Without me ye can do nothing,' were more deeply engraven and stamped upon the tables of our hearts, we would be walking alongst our pilgrimage with the sentence of death in our bosom, and have our confidence fixed on him above; for there is not only an inability in ourselves to do any thing, but also we are clothed with a woful impossibility as that word doth hold forth, 'without me ye can do nothing.' And certainly, the lower we will descend in the thoughts of our strength, we are the more fit to receive this divine influence from him, by which we are capacitated and rendered able for the doing of every duty. We must likewise make use of Jesus Christ in all our approaches unto God, as one before whom all our prayers must be accepted before him. The sacrifices of Judah cannot come up with acceptance upon that golden altar before the throne, except they be presented by him 'who is that great Master of request;' this is clear from Rev. viii. whereby the angel that is spoken of there, we understand to be the mes-

senger of the covenant; and by that incense we understand the merits of Jesus Christ, which is that precious vail that is spread over these sinful imperfections of our duties, which they must be mixed with, before they be an acceptable savour unto God. O! how doth he abominate and abhor all our prayers, if they want this precious ingredient, that sweet-smelling incense, the merits of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ! It is he who removeth all those rovings, and vain impertinencies that we have in the exercise of prayer, and doth present them in a more divine frame and contexture. He reduces them in a few words, and makes them more effectual for the obtaining of our requests. If the consideration of this were more with us, O how would it make Jesus Christ more precious in our eyes? As likewise it would discover unto us a more absolute necessity in having our recourse to him in all our approaches to God: such is the depth of the unsearchable grace of Christ, and of his infinite love towards sinners, that the voice of complaining on them was never heard in heaven: Christ never spake evil, but always good of believers before his Father, notwithstanding he hath oftentimes spoken reproofs to themselves; that is clear from John xvii. 8. where giving an account of the carriage and practice of his disciples unto his Father, he doth exceedingly commend their faith and their carriage towards him, and saith, 'They have received me, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me:' and yet in John xiv. 1. he doth challenge their unbelief: the one speech he directeth to God his Father, and the other he directeth to them. Love in a manner doth silence all the noise of complaints with him, and maketh him always breathe out love in his expressions of them before the throne. He will whiles be speaking roughly to believers themselves, but, to say with reverence to his blessed Name, he never telleth any ill tale of them behind their backs.

But now we shall insist a little in pointing out what things are convenient and suitable for a Christian to exercise himself unto, before he go about this divine and holy duty, in conversing and speaking to God.

And *First*, we think a Christian, before he come and take upon him this holy and divine exercise of talking with God, he ought to be much in the exercise of meditation, not only of the inconceivable highness and dignity of the glorious and inexpressible person with whom he is to converse, but also upon the inconceivable baseness and lowness of himself; so that by the consideration of the highness of the one, he may be provoked to reverence; and by the consideration of the other, he may be provoked to loathing.

1. A Christian before he go to prayer, should study to have a deep impression of those things which he is to make the matter of his supplication to God, and to have them engraven upon his heart; and truly we think the want of this, is oftentimes the occasion of that woful evil of lying unto the Holy Ghost; for we complain in prayer, and personate or counterfeit resentment for those things, which never before was the grief of our hearts. Oftentimes we speak many things with our lips, ere we study to have our hearts inditing those things that we speak. And likewise in the exercise of blessing and praising him from the consideration of any great desirable mercy, we do personate and feign joy from the consideration of these things, which before we never made the matter of our joy, because they were not much the subject of our consideration. It were, no doubt, the great advantage of the Christian in the exercise of prayer, to be much taken up in the obedience of this command, Eccl. v. 2. 'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few.' Seldom doth the Christian look or speak with God, but, if he hath as much grace as to reflect upon it, he may be convinced that he is uttering things that are not fit to be spoken to God: O to be studying that divine abridgement of our prayers, which no doubt would speak nothing before him but what our hearts doth indite; there is something of this holden out in the practice of David; Psalm xlv. 1. where he beginneth with that, 'my heart doth indite a good matter:' and then he subjoins, 'my tongue is as the pen of a ready writer.' Our oratory might be more refined, and confined likewise; and it would be more effectual for the obtaining of our desires, if we were studying this. O that our hearts might speak more in prayer, and our tongues less. We through the multitude of business, produce multitude of dreams to ourselves.

Thirdly, This is likewise requisite for a Christian before he go to prayer, to be studying holiness, to endeavour to have his filthy garments wherewith he is clothed, changed with change of raiment; he must put off the shoes of his feet, 'because he is to go to stand upon holy ground.' This was the commendable practice of that holy man, David, Psalm xxvi. 6. 'I will wash mine hands in innocency: then will I compass thine altar, O Lord.' This is likewise clear from Exod. x. 18, 19. where Aaron and the sons of Levi were to wash their hands and their feet in the brasen laver, that did stand betwixt the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, when they came near to minister or burn offerings by fire unto the Lord: we must likewise endea-

vour to symbolize the practice, and to have ourselves washen in the laver of regeneration, and in that 'precious fountain that is opened to the house of David, for sin and for uncleanness.' Zech. xiii. 1. Before we enter into the holiest of all, what ornament is so suitable, for one who is walking unto that higher palace, than that glorious ornament of holiness, without which we are rendered unacceptable to God, and with which we may with confidence and boldness go and serve him in his holy temple? No doubt, if the deep impression of that absolute holiness, and purity of that Majesty with whom we are to converse, (when we go to prayer) were engraven upon our spirits, we would study to be like him: for the foundation of friendship, and fellowship, doth somewhat stand in a similitude of natures, and somewhat in conformity one with another.

And, *lastly*, When a Christian is going to prayer, he ought to be much in the consideration of the advantage and dignity that is to be found in the exercise of this duty. This would make us more ardent and serious in the study of the former: and unless we superadd this to the rest, we cannot long continue in a constant endeavour after the attainment of these three former qualifications, which are required of one who would approach unto God.

Now we shall shut up our discourse, by speaking a little unto this, what ought to be the sweet companions of a Christian who is going about the exercise of this duty, in a serious, and not in a hypocritical manner.

1. He would study to have his spirit under the deep impression of a Deity, and consider this, that he is talking with one, before whom angels (these glorious and excellent spirits) do cover their faces with their wings. Which, no doubt doth point out the holy reverence that they have of him: the long familiarity and constant conversing with God hath not removed that due and proper distance, which they ought to keep with him: and certainly, were he known to us by no other name, than that of Merciful, yet ought we to fear the Lord and his goodness. O! how much more, when he who is made known and revealed to us by that great and terrible name, Jehovah, by which 'he is exalted above all names that are in heaven, or in earth,' Phil. ii. 9. And by which is pointed out that infinite distance that is betwixt God and us, No doubt if the impression of a Deity were with us, it would remove much formality that we use in prayer; it would likewise remove much of our misbelief, that we have in all our approaches unto him; were we afraid, lest that woful inscription that Paul did discern to be engraven on an altar at Athens, 'To the unknown God,' were found on us;

alas! I fear it may be engraven on most part of our devotions; and likewise that wherewith Christ did challenge the people of Samaria, he may challenge many of us, John iv. 23. And it may be written on our practice, 'Ye worship ye know not what: who are those who 'bless an idol,' and no doubt, such sacrifices as these, are 'as if we were offering swine's blood, and cutting off a dog's neck, which are an abomination unto God,' Isa. lxvi. 3.

II. The excellent grace of humility, should be the sweet companion of a Christian in the exercise of prayer. We must put off our ornaments, and clothe ourselves with sackcloth, and spread ashes upon our heads, when we begin to speak to him. He that sits nearest the dust, sits nearest the heavens. We must be walking under the impression of this, that we are not worthy to lift up our eyes to heaven; and with holy Abraham, (upon whose effigy this was engraven, James ii. 23. 'That he was a friend of God)' when he begins to talk to this glorious and incomprehensible Majesty, (in a manner) he conceived it to be presumption, Gen. xviii. 27. 'Behold now (saith he), I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes.' He doth prefix a note of admiration, 'Behold!' importing, that it was a bold adventure for so low a person to speak to so high a Majesty; or for so sinful a creature to open his mouth unto so pure and spotless an One, that the footstool should speak to him who is the Throne: and, no doubt, were this more our exercise, we might be receiving more remarkable significations of his respect and love towards us. What is the royal gift which he giveth to those that are humble? *Grace;* for as the apostle saith, James vi. 6. 'He giveth grace to the humble, &c.' His love is seeking that person that sits lowest, even as waters do seek the lowest ground. He that is first in his own estimation, is last in the estimation of God; but he that is last in his own estimation, is amongst the first in the estimation of God: therefore, no doubt, that is a suitable clothing for a person who is to go to the court of heaven, which the apostle Peter requireth, 1 Pet. v. 5. 'Be clothed with humility.' O! but that woful evil of pride, which doth either arise from our ignorance of ourselves, or from our ignorance of God, doth both obstruct our access unto him, and the return of our prayers. If we should give a description of the person who is permitted to detain Christ in his galleries, we could not give it a more suitable term than this, that he is of 'a humble and contrite spirit,' Isa. lxvi. 2. and lvii. 15.

III. And a *third* sweet companion of a Christian in the exercise of this duty of prayer, is faith and confidence in God, that we have to do with one who is 'the hearer of prayer, and who

is willing to give unto us all things that we desire, if we ask in faith, for we must exercise faith, not only upon his promises, but likewise upon that glorious and incommunicable attribute that is given unto him, Psalm lxv. 1. that he is 'the hearer of prayer;' want of this, maketh us come little speed: and we likewise think that the want of this maketh us live so little in expectation, and wait with patience and hope at the posts of his doors, until we receive a return. Is it any wonder, that our prayers be 'as the beating of the air, and the pouring out of some empty words,' if we be not convinced of this, that he is not like unto us? God is not like Baal, who because of sleep, or some other business, cannot give present audience to our desires, so that we need not be constrained to cut ourselves with knives, or to leap upon the altar, to provoke him to cause fire to descend upon our altar, to burn our drowned sacrifices, he is as able to give audience to us, as if there were no other to employ him. Multitudes of supplications will be no interruption unto the audience of our desires; he hath that royal prerogative, and eminent excellency above all the judges of the earth, that he can take in many bills at once; which is a demonstration of the Omnipotency and infinite understanding and knowledge of God. If that word, Matth. xxii. 21, 22. were believed, 'Whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive it,' how would we study to have this necessary and sweet companion of faith alongst with us in all our prayers? And as James speaketh, chap. i. 6. 'He that asketh, let him ask in faith; for he that wavereth and doubteth, is as the waves of the sea, that can receiveth nothing.'

A *fourth* sweet companion in the exercise of prayer, is fervency. Can we live under such a woful delusion, as to conceive that God heareth those suits and petitions which we scarcely hear ourselves? Can we have much zeal in proposing our desires, when we do it with such woful indifferency? We have the example of that holy man, David, to commend this unto us, Psalm xxix. 12. where we may behold a glorious gradation and climax; for he says, 'Hear my prayer,' and that not being sufficient, he doth ascend one step higher, and saith, 'hold not thy peace at my cry,' that voice being a little louder than the voice of prayer; and yet again, he ascendeth one step farther, and saith, 'hold not thy peace at my tears.' These silent cries, the tears of a Christian, have most rhetoric, and loudest voice to heaven; their sweet emanations and flowings out of water, from that precious fountain of a contrite and broken spirit; they do, no doubt, ascend high, and have a great power with him, who is Almighty. Jacob (in a manner) did hold the angel that wrest-

led with him, with no other cord but with the cord of supplications, as is clear from Hosea xii. 4. and Gen. xxxii. 20. Did ever your eyes behold such cords and bonds made of tears? No doubt, these are of a beautiful frame and contexture, and of infinite more value, than the most precious and rare chains that the greatest princes in the world do wear as ornaments: and truly, the want of this proceedeth from the want of the solid conviction of the absolute necessity we stand in of these things; for as one well said, 'strong necessities, makes strong desires. And proceedeth also from the want of the consideration of the precious excellencies that are to be had in those things that we ask. The eminency of a thing doth increase vigour of pursuit after it, and maketh us, with seeking of it, mount up with wings as eagles over all the difficulties that lye as impediments in our way. Ought we not to be emulous of the practice of Nineveh: of whom this is recorded, 'That they cried mightily unto God,' Jonah iii. 8. We think many Christians of this generation (because of their woful remissness and coldness of affection in proposing their desires) may be constrained to mourn over all their mournings, and pray over all their prayers.

Now, if a Christian's heart be the temple of the Holy Ghost, O! how ought we to pray? For it is the diamond which the apostle puts in the upshot of all the graces of the Spirit, Eph. vi. 8. and after which he exhorteth Christians seriously to pursue. Oh! I think it is a mystery that we cannot well conceive; but those who are most in the exercise of it, can best resolve it, and take up its precious effects: but, believe me, it is one of the most dark mysteries that is to be found in the practice of a Christian, except he, in whom is all 'treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' to unfold this one divine sentence, 'Pray without ceasing;' it shall always remain a mystery to our obedience. It is a question, we confess, that is sometimes difficult to determine, whether some duties, which are commanded to be done by us, be more mysterious to our understanding to take up the nature of them, and what is commended in the lively and spiritual exercise of such a duty? Or whether they be most mysterious to us in our practice and obedience? We confess, it holdeth not alike in all things, it being more easy for us to know, than to practise many things: we conceive, it holdeth out in some, and even in those duties that are most obvious, (as we conceive) and that have least of the mysteriousness of the gospel engraven upon them, &c.

SERMON II.

1 Thess. v. 17. *Pray without ceasing.*

It were for our great advantage, to be much taken up in the serious and divine consideration of that most sad, but most true saying, 'That many are called, but few are chosen:' yea, if there were but one of each twelve that are within this house to day, to whom Christ thus (sadly) should speak, 'one of you will betray me,' ought ye not all to be put to an holy enquiry and search, and say unto him, 'Master, is it I? Master is it I? and to be exceeding sorrowful, until that concerning question be determined unto you? How much more ought you to accomplish a secret and serious search, to know whether or not 'ye be written among the living in Jerusalem, and have passed from death to life?' Seeing, alas! I think it is more probable, that if precious Christ were to speak to each twelve that are within this house, we are afraid that he should thus (sadly) speak, 'There are eleven of you that shall betray me, and one shall only pass free.' And, oh! that the number of those who are to betray the precious Son of God, were reduced to so few, though indeed these be many.

If he, 'who seeth not as man seeth, who reproveth not after the hearing of the ear, nor after the seeing of the eye,' (who can reject an Eliab, the more fair in show and appearance, and can choose a stripling like David) were to give his verdict, and pass sentence on all that are here; oh! upon how many of our foreheads might this dreadful sentence be engraved, *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin;* 'Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found light.' I am afraid, that even some professors, who have a form of godliness, and yet have not the power thereof, and are likewise 'painted sepulchres, that are fair without, but within are full of dead men's bones;' he shall reject their confidence, and cut 'off their hopes as a spider's web.' Religion that is pure and undefiled, is another thing than we take it to be. We must not think to go to heaven in a bed of roses, we must strive, and earnestly contend to enter in at the strait gate.' And if ye would have a description of those who are shut out from the presence of the Lord, and who are of that woful number, to whom *Tophet is ordained of old;*' the Psalmist giveth a description of them, Psalm xiv. 4. 'They call not upon God.' But, if we say, that this is the description of those who shall be eternally secluded from God's presence, that they pray not unto God, ye will then think, that ye are not of that list: for who is so hardened (say ye) as not to pray to

him who is Almighty, and pay that due homage unto him, who is the Creator of 'all the ends of the earth?'

But unto such athiests as these, I shall propose these four things, which if you are not able to give a positive answer unto, be persuaded that ye never knew what it was to pray unto God, so as to have your offerings coming up with acceptance upon his holy altar.

1. Did ye ever know what it was to go to prayer upon an internal principle of love, and the grace of Christ constraining you? Are there not many of you, O atheists! who do not know what this means, to have the precious bonds of love constraining and imposing a blessed necessity upon your hearts, to converse with God in prayer? Did ye ever know what it was to bind your 'sacrifices to the horns of the altar' by the cords of love?

2. Did ye ever know what it was by prayer to attain to more conformity with God, and to crucify your lusts? There are many, and I may say, some professors, to whom this is a mystery, through fasting and prayer to crucify an idol or lust. It were good ye had a holy jealousy over yourselves, that you are in 'the bond of iniquity, and gall of bitterness.' The most part of our mortification is rather by consent, than by constraint; our idols do rather go out, than are cast out; or else our idols die rather to us, than we do to them. Hence it is, that oftentimes after we have famished our gods, we sit down and bemoan ourselves over the graves of our idols; and as David lamented over Absalom, so do we over our lusts.

3. Did ye ever know, what it was to distinguish betwixt absence and presence? When did ye meet with such a place, which ye might call Peniel, that you have seen God face to face? And in another place, you might have said, "Here he did turn about "the face of his throne, and did vail himself with a cloud," so that I know not where to find him.

4. I shall in the last place propose this question, which I conceive may not only convince profane atheists, but also some who have a shew of religion. Did you ever know what it was to sit down and lament over absence from Christ, and think it an insupportable want? O! where is the exercise of the grace of love now gone? O! but Christ may live long in heaven, before the most part of us give him a visit; I fear he will visit us, before we visit him.

And now, O atheists! examine yourselves by these, and be persuaded, that if ye know not what these things mean, ye are yet strangers unto the spiritual exercise of the duty of prayer, and all the prayers that ever ye have presented, have been but

'as smoke in his nostrils, and a fire that burneth all the day.' Believe me in this, O men of the world, that in the day when ye shall solemnly appear before God in the 'valley of decision,' this shall be a great *item* of your ditty, that ye have prayed so much, or rather that ye have profaned his holiness (which you pretend to love) so much. O that all of us were not 'almost, but altogether persuaded to be Christians!' Seeing Christ doth offer that precious dignity, to make us not only 'sons-in-law to a King, which ought not to seem small in our eyes,' but also to make us kings and priests unto God;' can we refuse such an offer as this? Might not he summon the heavens and the earth, and angels, and our brethren, who are now above, to behold a wonder? Yea, and no doubt it is a wonder, that any of us should slight such an offer.

Now, if any of you would ask at me that question, What is and should be the native exercise of a Christian, while he is here below in the land of his exile, and a stranger from his Father's house? Whether he should exercise himself in singing or praying? We answer, that prayer is, and should be the main exercise of a christian, while he is here below in the land of exile, and is a stranger from his Father's house, and when the promises are not yet accomplished, nor all the prophecies fulfilled. We confess, the exercise of joy and rejoicing in God, ought to be a necessary duty and exercise of a Christian; we may sing the songs of those excellent musicians and heavenly harpers, 'that stand upon the sea of glass, having harps in their hands.' And our songs which are here below, are only different in degrees; their songs are of a higher key, and our songs are of a lower key; though we confess, they are more expert in that divine art, for we oftentimes spoil our songs in the singing of them: as likewise, they are more constant in that blessed exercise; but alas! we are oftentimes constrained to hang our harp on 'the willow trees, while we sit by these rivers of Babel.' But if we should praise more, we would pray more; and if we did pray more, we would praise more. O! but prayer would furnish us matter of new songs every day; and if we were much in that exercise, we might have that blessed Psalm to sing, 'He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto the Lord.' I think a Christian may examine himself by this unerring rule of his growth in grace, he may know it by the exercises of secret prayer: this is the pulse of a Christian, by which he may know his constitution; and the slow beatings of the pulse of the Christians of this generation, doth prove this unto us, that grace is in a remarkable decay; it is groaning with us, 'as the groanings of a wounded man.' O! but if we were more obedient unto this precious

command, 'Pray without ceasing,' our grace might be more vigorous, 'and our bed might be green,' and we might be 'bringing forth fruit in our old age.'

But now to that which we shall insist mainly upon in going through this duty and grace of prayer, (besides those things that we spoke of on last occasion) viz. What are these strong impediments and obstructions, that do impede and hinder a Christian's access unto God, in his secret retirements in prayer? If we were asked when did we last behold him! We may say that which Esther spake to the servants of Mordecia, 'It is thirty days since I did behold the king's face." But alas! our lot of lamentation and defection from God, may ascend to a higher pitch; yea, it is many thirty days since we did behold the King. O! but we are great strangers in heaven, and though we should be eternally so, we could not debate with his justice.

The first impediment that obstructs a Christian's liberty in having access unto God in his secret devotions, is that woful and carnal design, which he doth propose to himself in the exercise of that duty; we are low in our designs, which makes us low in our enjoyments. This is clear, James iv. 3. where there is given as a reason, why we do not receive that which we pray for, 'We ask amiss, to spend it upon our lusts.' We pray in secret, that we may be more fitted to pray when we go abroad, and thereby get applause: hence it is, that so much of Christians persuits are rather taken up in seeking after the ornaments of prayer, than after the grace of prayer; rather to pursue after these things that adorn it, than those things that are saving in it; and oftentimes the ministers of the gospel have that woful end proposed to themselves. How oftentimes do our hearts speak that which Saul said to Samuel, 'Honour me this day before the people and elders of Israel?' And I think Christians may easily discern, whether or not they propose this to themselves as the last and ultimate end of their devotions? And one who hath these woful qualifications, doth resent and grieve more for his public straitenings and bonds, than for those which he hath in private. Are there not many of us here, who will rise up from secret prayer, under the undeniable conviction of much distance from God, and yet never know what it is to have an anxious thought about it? O! when did absence from Christ in our secret retirements make us 'forget to eat our bread? Oh! that sickness of love, where is it gone? We are seek unto death of imaginary health, and we wish that the sickness of love were more epidemical and universal in those days, which were not a sickness unto death, 'but for the glory of God.' And in our public straitenings, when we converse one with another, how much do we grieve and re-

pine? Though, we confess, these are rather the grievings of pride, than of love, rather lamentation, because of the loss of our redemption than because of the loss of our absence from Christ? Those who hath this woful qualification, of proposing this to themselves as the end of their devotions, may likewise know it by this, that when they are straitened in their public approaches to God, and others are enlarged, they then envy and fret, and are rather endued with envy, than holy emulation; which proveth to us, that we are not great in the kingdom of heaven, because we are not much concerned how to glorify God, which hath given such gifts to men; but we sit down on his wise and wonderful dispensation, 'Though he hath given to others five talents, and to us but one;' so that oftentimes we are provoked to that impious course, as 'to bind up our talent in a napkin, and to dig it in the earth, and to hide our Lord's money.' Studying by that practice, to appropriate the estimation of humility unto ourselves, when we cannot get the estimation of one that is eminent in parts and abilities, which doth oftentimes provoke God to take that from us, which we seem to have, 'and to give it to him that hath more, so that he may have abundance.' One who proposeth this woful end in himself, as the end of his devotions, may likewise know it by this, that seldom or never doth he go about the exercise of prayer from a principle of love or delight to walk with God, but to attain the expressions of prayer: hence it is, when the most of Christians come abroad, they rather prove themselves orators, than Christians; the voice of words is more heard, than the voice of affections, and these inexpressible sighs and groans of the spirit.

O! the real and spiritual exercise of that duty is far gone into decay, there is not one among a thousand that doth study earnestly after it. Think ye to pursue and win God by your fair blossoms and flourishing rhetoric, gallantness and fineness of expression? Will not he, who is infinite in understanding, laugh at your folly? Are ye to persuade a man? Are ye not rather to persuade God? Ye may likewise know by this, whether or not ye propose it to yourselves as the last and ultimate end of your devotions, and it is, when ye have most enlargements and access unto God, in your secret retirements, and ye desire and covet to have manifest spectators and auditors, that so they may pass that testimony upon you, 'That ye are men greatly beloved of God,' that doth receive such singular testimonies, of his love and of his respects; but woe be unto you that are such hypocrites, 'who covet the greetings of the markets, and uppermost rooms at feasts, desiring to be called of men, Rabbi:'

verily ye shall have your reward; then he that is first, shall be last, and he that is last, shall be first.' Then that proverb shall be taken up over you, 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning?' When Satan by his tail shall draw all stirring stars down out of heaven, towards the earth. And we think this woful evil of proposing ourselves as the end of our devotions, doth not only obstruct his grace, but likewise, when we attain to it in some measure, it breaks it off.

It is certain, that when a Christian hath most nearness with God, and is (in a manner) lifted up to the third heavens, then he doth receive great liberty of expressions, winning to some high and eminent conceptions of God, and some significant expressions of his own misery, then our pride causing us to reflect upon what we have spoken, do much quench our holy flame of zeal and love; we study to have expressions in our memory, that we may express them when we come abroad, rather than affections in the heart; and thus hath obstructed many Christians of precious enjoyments, and doth prove this eminently to you, that ye are more taken up in the expressions of your enjoyments than with the enjoyments themselves.

We confess there are some who are more rude and gross in their carriage, who go about this exercise of prayer, that they may take advantage to sin with more liberty and with fewer challenges; like that adulterous woman mentioned in Prov. vii. 14, 18. who after she had said, she had peace-offerings with her, and that she had paid her vows, she inferred this, 'That she would go and take her fill of loves, and solace herself till the morning.' Your prayers O atheists! are always an abomination in the sight of the Lord. O! how much more, when ye bring them with such a wicked mind? How will you hide your sins with such a covering? O! take heed to your spirits, lest ye deal treacherously with God; there are many of us that pray like saints, but we walk like devils; surely one that heard us pray might prophesy good things of us, but in our life may find their prophecies fail in the accomplishment.

There is a *second* impediment that doth obstruct a Christian's liberty in the exercise of prayer, in his secret retirements, which is that woful formality and indifferency of spirit that we use in the exercise of our secret prayers; the most part of us are ignorant, what it is to 'cry mightily to God, when we are alone, and to wrestle with him, were it until the dawning of the day, till he bless us, that so we may indeed be princes with God:' that by these two hands we may lay hold on him, faith and love; love lays hold on the heart of Christ, and faith lays hold on his word, and by it detains him in the galleries. I may speak this to

the shame of many of you, that it were to your advantage to be as serious in speaking unto God when you are alone, as ye are serious when ye are in company. A heathen observed this, and therefore pressed it upon all to whom he wrote, that they should beware of woful indifferency. And we confess that this woful indifferency of ours, is but an involving ourselves in that curse, 'Cursed be the man that hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing.' O what if precious Christ should propose that unanswerable challenge to many of us who are here, are the consolations of God small to you? Or is there any secret thing with you, that you do so little pursue after these things? We confess, our formality and woful indifferency, doth much proceed either from the want of a solid impression of a Diety before whom we pray, or else from the want of a spiritual conviction of the absolute necessity of the things that we pray for. Ye formalists, whose constant practice is to be formal, by your formality ye make your bonds stronger upon your spirits, and do wreath the yoke of your transgressions round about your necks. These impertinent rovings of the spirit that we have in the exercise of prayer, doth, no doubt, come from this fountain of woful formality that we have in it; fowls do with liberty descend upon the carcases, when we are formal, and it is only fervency that must drive away these.

The *third* impediment that obstructs a Christian's liberty is, we are not much taken up in employing of the Holy Ghost, that must help our infirmities, and must breathe upon our withered spirits, otherwise such dead bones as we are cannot live; "Our bodily exercise profiteth little, it is the Spirit that quickneth" as is clear, John iii. 8. And certainly, except "the north or south wind blow, our spirits cannot flow out; except the angel move the water, we cannot step in and be healed." O! but that word is a mystery to our practice, which is in the twentieth verse of the epistle of Jude; and surely we may be astonished when we read it over, and we may be ashamed that we are so little in the real practice of it, where this is put in amongst the midst of the Christian's duties, that we should pray 'in the Holy Ghost: and certainly, that duty is required of us, although it be a mystery, and an unknown thing to the practice of the most part of the Christians of this generation. I think, a Christian that is much in the employment of the Holy Ghost, when he goeth to pray, he is put to an holy *non plus*, so that he knoweth not what he shall say, and is oftentimes put without a compliment to propose that desire to God, 'Lord teach us what we shall say, for we cannot order our speech before thee, by reason of our darkness. Think ye not that Peter, James, and John, had the spirit of prayer

eminently above us all, and yet they were not ashamed to propose that desire to God, 'Lord, teach us to pray?' It were for our concernment and advantage to pray even as though we had never prayed before. I am persuaded of it, that if this exercise of prayer were so gone about, we should have much more liberty of words, and of expressions than we have. It is certain, we must have no confidence in our gifts and abilities of prayer. The prayers that are penned in heaven, are best heard in heaven. That which the Holy Ghost doth dictate, (with reverence be it spoken) the Father can best read. The Father can read no character of any person, (to admit it) but which his blessed hands do pen.

There is this *fourth* impediment and objection, which obstructs a Christian's liberty and access to God, in his secret retirements and prayers, that we are so little taken up in the employing of Jesus Christ, as a Mediator in our approaches unto God. I think, it is impossible for a Christian to delight and enjoy himself with God, but through Jesus Christ, who is that 'vision of peace.' O Christians! through what door will ye enter into the 'holiest of all, if ye enter not through him, even through Jesus Christ, the vail of his flesh? In a manner, he is the door of heaven, and we must enter into heaven through the door. Christ is that great Courtier in heaven, by whom we must have access and admission unto the King. If any person dare adventure to go to pray without him, '(who is that blessed Days-man betwixt God and sinners)' he comes without his wedding-garment, and so that question shall be proposed to him, 'Friend, how camest thou hither? Or rather, 'O enemy, how camest thou hither without a wedding-garment?' And be persuaded of it, that ye shall remain speechless, not opening your mouth.

The *fifth* impediment and objection, which obstructs a Christian's liberty and access to God, in his secret retirements is, the woful intanglements and engagements of hearts that we have to impertinent vanities and trifles of this passing world; our hearts are mightily taken up with the perishing and decaying things that are in this life; yea, the most part of our hearts are married to the world, and to the things thereof; and we think, and are persuaded of it, that that doth exceedingly obstruct and mar our liberty and access unto God. This divinity was well known to godly David, Psalm lxvi. 18. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.' Hearing and access, although they be not much different, yet always the last presupposeth the first, and this divinity was also well known unto that blessed man, that is spoken of in John ix. 31. "And this we know, that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God,

and obey his will, him he heareth." I think these woful and dreadful evils that doth so easily beset us, doth exceedingly hinder and obstruct us to ascend in a spiritual cloud of divine and holy affection unto God; the souls of the most parts of us, are divided amongst many, and even amongst so many lovers, that it cannot devote and resign itself unto God; every impertinent idol and lust, doth claim a right and relation unto the soul, and then that obstructs a Christian's liberty in his secret retirements. O! to be more in the exercise of this precious and excellent grace of faith, whereby we may purify ourselves from all 'uncleanness of the flesh and of the spirit, and may be able to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.' O! can it be, that such a fountain, that such a defiled and corrupt fountain, that sends forth only salt water, can send forth any sweet, precious and soul-refreshing springs of living-water? This was a mystery, and a paradox unto the apostle James, chap. iii. 12. "Can the fig-tree bear olive-berries? Or can the olive-tree bear figs? So can no fountain yield salt water and fresh. And certainly, it shall always remain impossible for us to do both good and evil. Would ye know the livery which the church of Christ must have, and her members? It is to be clothed with holiness. For, no doubt, that is the robe and garment with which we must enter into the holiest of all: and may not that incite and provoke your desires to follow after it, which is so excellent and precious? Believe it, we are not able to tell the worth of it.

There is this *sixth* impediment, which obstructs a Christian's liberty and access unto God in his secret prayer, and it is that woful resisting and quenching of the motions of the Spirit, that oftentimes we fall into. Hence it is, that when a Christian doth go to God, he is debarred, and his prayer is shut out from God; and the reason of it is, because he debarred God before: and this is remarkably clear from the bride's practice, Cant. v. 2. compared with the following verses, she held Christ at the door, notwithstanding his 'locks were wet with the dew of the night, and his hair with the drops of the morning.' But when she had condescended to open to him, he had withdrawn himself from her. O! who would hold out such a precious guest? Surely it were a more suitable exercise for us, that we should admire and wonder, and stand astonished at his low condescension, that ever he should have condescended so low as to come unto us, rather than to requite that marvellous and unsearchable grace of his towards us, after such a way as many of us so sinfully do.

There is this *last* impediment, that hinders a Christian's liberty and access unto God, in his secret prayers, and it is that woful evil of pride, wherewith we are clothed so much in our

approaches to God; we ought 'to bow our heads seven times towards the ground,' when we begin to make our approaches unto him, even unto him, who is greater than all the kings of the earth. Believe it, if the grace of humility were more our exercise in secret prayer, certainly we should enjoy more of him than we do; this is clear in 2 Pet. v. 7. where he saith, 'God giveth grace to the humble; but he resisteth the proud.' And likewise clear from Isa. lvii. 17. though he be that high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is holy, yet he saith, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." And though he be that high and lofty One, he loveth one that is of a pure and contrite spirit. O! might we not always say, 'That we are not worthy, that thou should even condescend so far, as to come under our roof? Modesty and reverence might make us admire such wonderful and precious visits; 'Whence is it,' saith Elizabeth, 'that the mother of my Lord should come to me?' much more may we say, "Whence is it, that the Lord himself should come to us?" We may challenge ourselves, that our enjoyments of God, are not more than they are.

Now we shall speak, *Secondly*, A little to you, (before we shut up our discourse) how a Christian may be helped after his enjoyments in prayer, (and after he had been admitted to taste of 'that pure river that flows out from beneath the throne of God) to rest in his love to Christ, and not to stir him up, nor awake him, before he please.' We confess, it is as much difficulty (if not more) to maintain communion with God, when it is gained, as to gain it when it is lost. O! but Satan hath oftentimes catched much advantage over the people of God, after their enlargements. When was it that John fell down to worship the angel, was it not when he had 'seen the bride the Lamb's wife, adorned?' as is clear, Rev. xix. 16. compared with the preceding verses: and it is clear again from John's practice, Rev. xx. 9. compared with the foregoing words. And when was it that the disciples did rove, not knowing what they spake, was it not when they were on mount Tabor, and did see the fashion of his face change before them? Matth. xvii. 2, 4, 6. Though we confess, we must give an indulgence unto that, it was nothing but the rovings of holy love that made them to do so; which alas! is not much heard in these days; we rove in a more impertinent manner. And we think, a Christian after his enjoyments and enlargements, ought especially to stand on his watch, and to 'pray lest be enter into temptation;' for the stroke he doth receive after enjoyments and enlargements, is one of the most

discouraging strokes, and most anxious, that he meeteth with: it hath been the occasion of much unbelief, and hath made his own to mourn, not only over the foundation, but also even to raze it down; arguing thus with themselves: if that when Christ was present with them, upon whom their strength was laid, they were led captive unto their lusts, Rom. vii. 23. how much more shall they be led captive by them, when Christ shall be absent and away? They have been put to draw that conclusion, 'One day I shall fall by the hand of some of mine enemies.' We should guard against such a stroke, because it doth always almost make the Christian call in question the reality of his enjoyments. It is hard for a Christian to receive a stroke by the hand of his iniquities after enlargements, and not presently to call in question the reality of them; yea, more to call in question his estate in grace; for they do often debate with themselves "If it had been "he who visited me, would he not have enabled me to sing a "new song of triumph over my lusts?" And also, ye would guard against it, because it is one of the most dishonourable indignities and affronts that can be put upon precious Christ; and if there were no more to provide you to guard against it, may it not be sufficient unto you, that that stroke which ye have received by your iniquities, after your enlargements and enjoyments of God, if it be by your own consent, (believe it, and be persuaded of it) that (in a manner) it saith this much unto you, that ye have preferred an idol and lust even to Jesus Christ? We think, the Jews preferring Barabbas before Christ, when the crown of thorns was upon his head, and when he was spitted upon and buffetted, is not such an indignity and disgrace as ye put upon him, when ye prefer your lusts und idols unto him, even when he is appearing with a crown of glory and Majesty unto you, and a robe of righteousness and of joy. O! dare ye even in his presence prefer any thing before him; might not angels, and the souls of just men made perfect, and all that are round about the throne, might they not all take up that lamentation over you, 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?' And we think, there are these three woful evils, that readily befals a Christian after enlargements and enjoyments that he meets with.

There is this *first* evil of security, Cant. v. 3. compared with the first verse, where Christ, when he was come into his garden, 'Had gathered his myrrh with his spices, and had eaten his honey-comb with his honey, and had drunken his wine with his milk:' and yet for all these enjoyments the spouse was sleeping; as likewise in Zech. iv. 1. compared with the preceding chap. where the prophet fell asleep after his enjoyments, 'until the an-

gel came and awaked him'. Oh! we readily sleep in the bed of love; and that hath impeded many excellent visits that we might have. O! what a visit was that of the spouse? Cant. v. We may question, whether ever she got such an one while she was here below.

And *secondly*, That woful evil of pride, as is certainly presupposed in 2 Cor. xii. 7. where, lest Paul should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of revelations, there is a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. O! but it is a dangerous exercise for a Christian to search out his glory. We confess, we do not search to strengthen our confidence, or our love, but to add oil to that fire of pride, in our reflections upon ourselves; The wind doth lift us up upon its wings, and we ride upon it till our subsistance be dissolved.

And there is this *third* evil, which is not so obvious, but, no doubt doth oftentimes befal the Christian, and that is, self-love, which oftentimes he falleth unto after his enjoyments; and this evil doth certainly break off many of our enjoyments, to the disadvantage of the Christian, and hinders him to exercise himself in the grace of true love, which always we ought to be keeping in exercise, because, it is that oil by which our chariot-wheel must move swifter, and be as the chariots of Amminadab.

Now for that which we proposed, *viz.* How a Christian may be helped to keep his enjoyments, which he hath attained to by prayer. We shall only propose these two things. 1. Be much in the exercise of watchfulness after your enlargements, that ye enter not unto temptation. And 2. Be much in the exercise of humility, that when grace lifts you up, you may not lift up yourselves. O! but a Christian that walketh always with his feet towards the earth, and doth never mount an hand-breadth above it, he walketh most safely. I know nothing to keep your enjoyments in life, and to keep you from soaring in your enjoyments so much, as the grace of humility: but we need not insist long in telling you, how ye shall maintain your enjoyments; there are, alas! so few of them in these days; when were ye in heaven? Or when was heaven brought down to you in a manner? If the most part of us did now behold Christ, we would not know him, it is so long since we saw him. O precious Christ how much is he undervalued in these days? I think, if such a supposition as this were possible, that if Christ would go down to the pit of those damned persons that are reserved in everlasting chains, and preach that doctrine unto them, "Here am I, "receive me, and ye shall obtain life;" we question whether obedience or admiration would be most their exercise: would they not bind that command as a chain of gold about their necks?

But know it, ye that refuse him now, ere long he shall refuse you. O when shall that precious promise that is in Zech. viii. 21. be accomplished, "And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and seek the Lord of hosts; I will go also?" Or as the word may be rendered, continually. O! when shall such a voice be heard in the city of Glasgow? Seeing our brethren above sing without ceasing, let us 'pray without ceasing.' And to you that pray, I shall say this word, ye that fervently pray without ceasing, it is not long before ye shall sing without ceasing, and without all interruption.

SERMON III.

1 Thess. v. 17. *Pray without ceasing.*

Real godliness is so entire and undivided, and the parts of it are so inseparably knit, and linked one with another, and cannot be parted, that it is like Christ's coat that was without seam, that it could not be divided; and except the whole fall to us by divine lot, we can have no part nor portion in it. And were this more solidly believed, and imprinted up on our hearts, the inseperable connection and near cognation that is amongst all the graces of the Spirit, we should not be so partial and divided in our pursuits after them, 'seperating these things which he hath joined together,' which oftentimes is the occasion that our nakedness and deformity doth appear; neither should we (if this were believed) be so soon satisfied with our attainments, (but in a manner) should be entertaining an holy oblivion and forgetfulness of all that we have purchased, to put by our hand, and should be "passing forward to those things that are before, till once we attain to that stature of one in Christ." And till grace have its perfect work, and want nothing, we can never be constant. Amongst all the graces of the Spirit, which a Christian ought vigorously to pursue after, this grace of prayer is not amongst the least: it is that which keepeth all the graces of a Christian in life and vigour, 'and maketh us fat and flourishing, and bringeth forth fruit in our old age: and except the Christian be planted by that wall, his branches will never climb over the wall; who is the Christian that groweth like 'a palm tree, and doth flourish as the cedar in Lebanon?' It is he that is planted in the house of the Lord, which is a house of prayer. And we conceive, that the fundamental cause why grace and the real exercise of godliness is under such a woful and remarka-

ble decay in these days, it is want of obedience unto this great commandment, 'Pray without ceasing. Were we dwelling forty days in the mount with God, our faces should shine, and we should be constrained to cast a veil over them.' Were we entertaining a holy and divine correspondence with heaven by this messenger of prayer, we might be tasting of the first fruits of that land afar off. Prayer is one of these faithful messengers and spies which a Christian sends forth to view the promised land, and which always doth bring up a good report upon that excellent and glorious land. O! when went ye to the brook Eshcol by the exercise of prayer, and did cut down a branch with a cluster of grapes, and were admitted to behold that land, which is the glory of all lands, in the midst of which doth grow that tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits every year?' O! what a land suppose you it to be, wherein are twelve harvests every year? Alas! we are straitened in our desires, which makes us straitened in our enjoyments. May we not blush and be ashamed, that the men of the world should enlarge their desires as hell, and as death, and shall cry, *Give, give,* after these passing and transient vanities of the world; and that Christians should not be provoked to enlarge their desires as heaven, and as the *sand by the sea-shore,* after these things that are most high and divine in their nature, and are most fruitful and advantageous in their enjoyments? We think ignorance is the cause of our slow pursuit after these things; and ignorance in men of the world, is the occasion of their swift and vigorous pursuit after these endless and passing vanities of this vain and transient world.

We did at the last occasion (speaking upon these words) speak somewhat to that which doth obstruct a Christian's liberty in his secret retirements and conversing with God, so that the door of access is oftentimes shut upon him, and he hath not the dignity conferred upon him to enter into the *holiest of all.*

We spake likewise to that which was the best and most compendious way to maintain fellowship and communion with God, after once it is attained, that when our hearts are enlarged, we may keep our spirit in a tender and spiritual frame; we shall now, in the next place, speak a little to you, how a Christian may be helped to know the reality of his enjoyments, whether they be delusions, yea, or not; or tokens and significations of the Lord's special and singular respect; and before we speak of that, we shall premise these two things:

First, That a man which hath but a common work of the Spirit, and hath never been endued with real and saving grace, he may attain to many flashes of the Spirit, and some tastings 'of the power of the world to come:' as likewise, to the receiving of

the word of the gospel with joy; as is clear from Heb. vi. 5. and Matth. xiii. 20. He may have many things that looks like to most heavenly and spiritual enjoyments of a Christian: but we conceive, that the enjoyments of these that have but a common work of the Spirit, they are not of such a measure and degree as the enjoyments of the sincere Christian: hence they are called, in Heb. vi. 5. but a tasting; the word is sometimes used for such a tasting, as when one goeth to the merchant to buy liquor, he doth receive somewhat to taste, to teach him to buy: but that is far from the word which is in Psalm xxxvi. 8 'They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.' And from that word which is in Cant. v. 1. 'Eat and drink abundantly, O beloved.' We conceive likewise, that their enlargements and enjoyments which they have, the strength and vigour of their corruptions are not much abated thereby; neither is conformity with God attained; hence is that word, Matth. xiii. 20. Though they receive the word with joy, yet the thorns, (which we do understand to be corruptions) they do grow without any opposition; and they that never knew what it was to have the strength and vigour of their lusts abated by their enjoyments, they have but a common work of the Spirit. The hypocrites enlargements are rather in public, and in their conversings one with another, than in their secret retirements; and those enjoyments that they have when they converse one with another, they do rather joy and rejoice, because of applause that they have by such enlargements, and of a reputation of having familiarity and intimateness with God, rather than for the enjoyments themselves; and that dignity and honour hath been conferred upon them to taste some of that river that flows from beneath the throne of God. We conceive likewise, that in all their enjoyments that they have, they do not much study and endeavour to guard against all obstructions and impediments that may stir up Christ, and awake him before he please; they can give their hearts a latitude to rove abroad after impertinent vanities; yea, presently after the seeming access and communion with God; as likewise, their desires to the duty of prayer, Christian duties is not much increased by their enlargements which they receive, being strangers, as in that word which is in Prov. x. 23. 'The way of the Lord is strength to the upright,' &c.

That which, *Secondly*, We shall speak of, (before we come to speak how a Christian may be helped to know the reality of his enjoyments), is this, that there is an enjoyment of gifts, which is far from the enlargement of the Spirit of grace. There may be much liberty of words, and of expressions, where there

is not much liberty of affection. We think, that it is a frequent delusion amongst his own, that they conceive their liberty of their expressions of themselves in prayer, is enlargement, but we are persuaded of this, that there may be much of this, and not much of the spirit of the grace of prayer. (As we told you before), The spirit of prayer is sometimes an impediment to words; so that a Christian which hath much of that, may have least of volubility and of expression.

But, *First*, These enjoyments that are real, which indeed are significations of his love and respect to you, they do exceedingly move and humble the Christian, and cause him to walk low in his own estimation. Hence is that word, 2 Sam. vii 18, 19. where David being under such a load of love, that (in a manner) he is forced to sit down and cannot stand, he doth subjoin that expression, 'Who am I, O Lord, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' And also in Job xiii. 5, 6. where that enjoyment which Job had of God, 'as to see him with the seeing of the eye,' (a sight not so frequent in those days) he subjoins a strange inference from so divine promises, 'therefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes.' And in Isa. vi. 5. compared with the preceding verses, where Isaiah from that clear discovery of God, as to see him in his temple, he is constrained to cry out, 'Wo is me, I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.' It were our advantage, that when we are lifted up to the third heavens, were it to hear words that are unspeakable, yet to cover our upper lip, and cry, *unclean, unclean;* we ought always to sit near the dust, the more that grace exalts us to heaven. And we conceive, that it is a most excellent way to keep ourselves in life after our enjoyments, to be walking humbly with God, and to know that the root beareth us, and not we the root. Christian enlargements that are real have this effect upon them, it doth provoke to a more constant exercise in pursuing after God; their diligence is enlarged, when they are enlarged; hence is that word, Psalm cxvi. 2. 'Because God hath inclined his heart unto me, (which presupposeth access) 'therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.' It is certain, that if our enjoyments be real, they will be well improven, for this is a sweet fruit which doth always accompany them.

2. Ye may likewise know the reality of your enjoyments, by your endeavours to remove all impediments and obstructions that may interrupt your fellowship and correspondence with God, according to that word, Cant. iii. 5. when after the church did behold him who had been so long absent, she is put to this, 'I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my beloved,

till he please.' I conceive, this is one of the most certain demonstrations of the reality of enjoyments, when ye are put to more carefulness and solicitude, to have all things taken out of the way that may provoke him to go away, and quench his Holy Spirit. O! but it is a marvellous undervaluing of the grace of Jesus Christ, to take such a latitude to ourselves after we have been enlarged.

3. Ye may likewise know the reality of your enjoyments by this, when ye do attain conformity with God by your enjoyments: hence is that word, 2 Cor. iii. 18. 'Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' Our corruption must be abated, if we would prove the reality of our enjoyments: for if we give them that complete latitude which they have had before, we have reason to be suspicious and jealous over ourselves: and we shall say this, do not rest upon all your enjoyments that you have here within time as satisfactory, but let them rather provoke your appetite, than suffice your desires and longings. That holy man David knew of no beginning of satisfaction, when eternity shall come, according to that word, Psalm xvii. 15. 'When I awake, (that is in the blessed morning of the resurrection) then shall I be satisfied with thy likeness.' Did David never find satisfaction here below? All that he did receive was but the streams that did flow from the immense and profound fountain and sea of love. He did drink out of the brook, while he was here below; but when he was above, he was drowned in that immense sea of love, and there was abundantly satisfied. O let the streams lead you to the fountain and river! when you win there, ye may sit down and pen your songs of everlasting praise; these are but of 'the valley of Achor, which must be a door of hope,' none have more entire and full enjoyment of him.

That which *thirdly* we shall speak to, shall be those advantages which a Christian may have by the exercise of prayer; we may say this unto you, 'Come and see,' can best resolve the question: for those spiritual advantages which a Christian may have in the real and spiritual discharge of this duty, that they are better felt than told. It is impossible sometimes for a Christian to make language of these precious and excellent things that he meets with in sincere and serious prayer.

The *First* advantage, it doth keep all the graces of the Spirit eminently in exercise, it maketh them vigorous and green; it keeps the grace of love most lively; for one that is much in the exercise of prayer, he doth receive so many notable discoveries and manifestations of the sweetness and glory of God, and most

rich participations of that unspeakable delight which is to be found in him, that he is constrained to cry forth, 'Who could not love him who is the King of saints?' O! when met ye with such an enjoyment of God in prayer as this? Did ye conceive, that ye were clothed with an impossibility to love him too much, or to love him as he ought to be loved? And when did you conceive, that it was an absurd opinion that he could be loved too much? Hence these two are conjoined together, 'Rejoice evermore,' and 'Pray without ceasing.' And what is joy, but a fruit of love, or rather an immense measure of love? We confess, it is a question that is difficult to determine, whether prayer or faith doth keep up love most in the exercise? We think love (whose foundation is upon sense) is most kept in exercise by prayer. Hence it is, when we are straitened in the exercise of that duty; and when he turns 'about the face of his throne,' then love begins to languish and decay, and then that excellent grace of faith doth step in, and speak this to love, 'Wait on God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.' Faith can read love in his heart, when sense cannot read love in his hands, nor in his face; but when he seemeth to frown, or to strike, faith can make such a noble exposition on such a dispensation. 'I know the thoughts of his heart, they are thoughts of peace and not of war, to give me an expected end.'

Prayer doth likewise keep the grace of mortification eminently in exercise: would ye know what is the reason that our corruptions do sing so many songs of triumph over us, and we are so much led captive by them according to their will? Is it not the want of the exercise of secret prayer, and that we are not much taken up in the employing of the angel, that must bind the old serpent the devil, as is mentioned, Rev. xx. 1. that hath the great chain in his hand? Hence Paul, when his corruptions were awakened and stirring within him, he knew no weapon so suitable for him as prayer; as is clear from 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8. Where the messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him, it is said, 'That he besought the Lord thrice that this might depart from him.' And our blessed Lord Jesus (speaking of the casting out of a devil) he saith, Matth. xvii. 21. 'This kind goes not out but by fasting and prayer.' It is no wonder that oftentimes we are led captive by our own iniquities and lusts, and corruptions mocking at our profession, and scorning such weak and feeble builders as we are, say to us, can such feeble Jews as these are build such a stately and glorious building in one day? But ye who are much in the exercise of this duty, and who, to your own apprehensions, do not receive much victory over your lusts, which maketh you oftentimes cry forth, "It is in vain for me to seek

"the Almighty, and what profit is there that I pray unto him?" We confess, the small success that a Christian hath, when he doth discharge the duty of prayer, doth sometimes constrain him to draw that conclusion, (I will pray no more.) We think the small victory that ye obtain over your lusts, and the little increase in the work of mortification, may proceed from the want of that divine fervency, and holy fervour that ye ought to have in your proposing your desires unto God. 'The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much,' as James saith, chap. v. 26. If we want fervency in proposing our desires unto God, it is no wonder that we want success. Or likewise, it may proceed from our want of faith, our misbelief giving the return of our prayers, before we begin to pray, and saying this unto us, 'Though we call, he will not answer:' but as James saith, chap. v. 19. 'The prayer of faith may save you who are sick,' and may raise you up, 'for whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive it.' And it doth oftentimes proceed from the love and great respect that God hath to you, desiring that your wounds may always be bleeding, so that you may always keep about his throne. Is it not known, that if our necessities were away, we should abridge and mince much of our secret devotions to God? In a manner, necessity is that chain whereby God binds the feet of his own to his throne: he desireth not that they should be away, and therefore they halt, so that they may rely on his strength to bear them.

Prayer doth likewise keep the grace of patience (under our most sad and crushing dispensations) eminently in exercise; would ye know the most compendious way to make you to possess your souls in patience under great troubles? then be much in the exercise of the grace of prayer: hence is that word, James v. 15. 'If any man be afflicted, let him pray, &c.' And what made Paul and Silas to sing in prison, and so patiently to endure the cross? was it not this, 'That they were praying at midnight?' Acts xvi. 25. Certainly one that hath attained to much divine submission, and holy enjoyments in the beginning of their cross, they have been much in the exercise of prayer. Did you never know (any of you) what such a thing as this meant, that going to complain of your anxiety to God, you have been constrained to forget them, and begin to bless and praise him, because he hath stopped the mouth of your complaints, and hath put a more divine and heavenly exercise in your hand? This the Psalmist did attain to, Psalm lxxxix. where the scope of the psalm will bear that he was going to complain of the misery of the church, and of himself; yet before ever he began to propone a complaint to God, he spent to the thirty-eighth verse in praising him. Some-

times Christians have been constrained to cry forth, 'It is better to be in the house of mourning, than in the house of mirth:' and to resolve not to fret, 'to be put in a hot fiery furnace, heated seven times more than ordinary,' if they have in the furnace 'one like the Son of God to walk with them.'

Prayer doth likewise keep the grace of faith eminently in exercise. O! but faith (which is one of the mysteries of godliness) doth much languish and decay in us through the want of prayer: it is impossible for a Christian to believe, except he be much in the exercise of prayer. We may maintain a vain hope and persuasion, but the spiritual exercise of faith cannot be kept in life without the holy exercise of prayer. Hence it is that prayer, when faith is beginning to decay, doth go to God and cry forth, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.' And we conceive, there are these three grounds, and golden pillars of faith, on which it doth lean, which prayer doth oftentimes administer and give unto it. *First*, There is that golden fountain, 'The faithfulness of God,' which prayer doth abundantly make evident unto the Christian: hence when a Christian doth pray according to his promise, and doth receive a return of his prayer, he doth receive a demonstration of the faithfulness of God, which is a pillar on which faith doth lean. Prayer doth likewise give unto faith this *second* pillar, which is the evidence and demonstration of the goodness of God. O! but one that is much taken up in the exercise of the grace of prayer, what large and eminent discoveries of God doth he receive? He oftentimes disappoints their fears, and overcomes their hopes and expectations; he doth not regulate our enjoyments according to our desire, but he doth regulate them according to that divine and most blessed rule, his own good will and pleasure; and O! blessed are we in this, that it is so. And *thirdly*, Prayer doth likewise furnish to faith experience, which is a pillar on which faith must lean. That which maketh the Christian to have so small experience, is want of the serious and constant exercise of prayer. O! but when he frowneth, we might have many things to support ourselves, if we were much in the serious exercise of this duty of prayer. And truly if we had these three pillars, our prayers would not return empty.

Now, the *second* advantage, that a Christian doth reap by the exercise of prayer, is, he is admitted by this duty to most intimate and familiar correspondence with God: did ye ever know what it was to behold him who is invisible, in the exercise of this duty? Did ye ever know, what these large and heavenly communications of his love do mean? Prayer is that divine channel, through which that river of consolation (that maketh glad the city of God) doth run. When was it that Cornelius did see

a man standing in white apparel, was it not when he was praying? And when was it that Daniel did meet with the angel, was it not when he was in the exercise of prayer, and offering up his evening oblation to God? O for communion and fellowship with God! (which is so rare and singular in these days.) Were the sweetness of it believed, we should be more frequent and constant in the pursuit of it. I confess, and wonder that we are not put to debate oftentimes, whether there be such a thing as communion and fellowship with him, we do so little enjoy it? What happiness (O beloved of the Lord, if so I dare call you) have ye, which doth so much satisfy you, that when your eternal happiness is clearly holden forth before your face, yet you do so much undervalue it? Surely this persuasion cometh not from him who hath called you. I think, if angels, and the souls of just men now made perfect, (if I may so speak) if they were admitted to behold that wonderful undervaluing of communion and fellowship with God, that is amongst the Christians of this generation, O how might they stand and wonder at us? They would think it a poradox and mystery to behold any undervaluing of him, who can never be valued. Would we not blush and be ashamed, if he should embrace you, ye that have so much undervalued him? I know no sin that a Christian shall be so much ashamed of, when he shall behold that noble Plant of renown, as the low and undervaluing conceptions and apprehensions that he hath had of him. If in heaven there were a latitude for us to pray, we should pray that prayer, (when first our feet shall stand within the threshold of the door of our everlasting rest) "pardon us for our undervaluing of thee, O precious Christ."

The *third* advantage which a Christian hath in the exercise of prayer, is this, it is that duty by which we must attain to the accomplishment of the promises. Though God be most free in giving of the promises, yet he will be supplicated for the accomplishing of them; this is clear, Ezek. xxxvi. 47. where, in the preceding words, there is named and holden forth large and precious promises, yet he subjoineth, 'Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them, &c.' This is likewise clear, 2. Samuel vii. 27. where David receiving the promise, that his house should be established for ever, and that the Messiah should come out of his loins, according to the flesh, he maketh that sweet fruit of it, 'Therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.' Is not this a mystery, to turn over your promises into prayers, and your prayers into songs of praises? It is no wonder that we oftentimes complain, 'That his word doth fail for evermore, because we are not much in the exercise of that duty, which must

bring the accomplishment of these things that he hath promised.

The *fourth* and *last* advantage that a Christian doth receive by the exercise of prayer, it is the most compendious and excellent way to resist temptations that assault us. We spake before of mortifying corruptions, when once they have seized upon us; and that is a notable way to mortify them by prayer; this is likewise an advantage, that when temptations begin to assault us, then we should go to our knees for relief. And I conceive, if a messenger of Satan were sent to buffet us, we might be constrained to 'to pray without ceasing.' Hence Jesus Christ, who knew what was the best and most effectual remedy to resist temptations, giveth this remedy of prayer, Matth. xxvi. 41. 'Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

Now we shall shut up our discourse, by speaking a little to the last thing we intended to speak of at this occasion, and it is, how a Christian may be helped to walk suitably as he ought, under his spiritual bonds and straits. We confess, it is one of the most hard difficult tasks in Christianity, for a person to walk with divine submission under his public bonds, that when God (in the depth of his unsearchable wisdom) hath thought fit to draw a vail over his face, to subscribe that truth, 'He hath done all things well.' We confess, God hath these precious designs in such a dispensation, as that he may first hide pride from our eyes, and that we may be taught to walk humbly with him. O! but if we were always enlarged in our public conversing one with another, how would we esteem of ourselves above measure, and begin to undervalue those persons that are not thus kindly dealt with by God? Hence it is, that he always mixeth our wine with our water; he knoweth that the pouring in of such precious liquor, these brittle vessels of ours could not contain it.

He hath this design likewise in such a dispensation, that we may be put to the sweet exercise of the grace of prayer: in a word, that we may be constant, and serious in that duty. We conceive, if some liberty of words and enlargements in public were granted, we would abridge and come short in our private devotions. It is the great scope and main drift of some, to seem great in the kingdom of heaven amongst men, though they be least in the estimation of Christ, 'who is that faithful and true witness.'

And there is this design likewise in such a dispensation, and it is, that we may be convinced of our folly, and of the atheism and pride of our hearts, that can rise up from secret prayer, and yet never have anxious thoughts about it; but in our public straits and bonds, O! how can we mourn and repine. And we confess, we think these repinings doth rather proceed from this,

that we think that gourd of worldly applause is now beginning to wither over us, and therefore we cry forth, 'It is better for us to die than to live;' than from this, want of the presence of Jesus Christ, in the participation of his sweetness, which we may most strongly convince you by this. Is it not sometimes so with you, that under your public bonds, when ye have been most remarkably straitened within yourselves; yet if your hearts have not conceived evil of you, but have testified their satisfaction, doth not your sorrow even decay, and there is no more repining thereat?

Now we think the best and most compendious way for a Christian to bear such a dispensation, (as to obtain to a divine submission to Christ in all things, and to leave our complaints upon ourselves) is this, we should study much the vanity of our popular applause, what an empty and transient a thing it is. I confess, I would wish no greater misery to any, than to seek, and to have it; we think it misery enough to have it; but certainly they walk safest and most secure that care not for it. Hence a heathen said well to this purpose, *Qui bene latet, bene vivit*; He that lurks well, lives well. I would likewise have you much taken up in the consideration, how ye have great disadvantage by your repinings and murmurings, which you have against his dispensations, in straitening you in public. O Christians! do not your repinings incapacitate and indispose you for the going about the exercise of secret prayer? Doth not your repinings, under your public bonds, make your bonds stronger upon your spirits? I confess a Christian may contract and draw on more fetters and bonds by one hour's repining against such dispensations, than he is able to shake off for many days: and when ye are repining against such dispensations, that ye have met with, doth not your lusts and corruptions stir and awake within you? Surely they then prevail, and we may say, *Nullo contradicente*, nothing in opposition against them to our apprehension.

We would also say this to you, that ye may attain to a divine and holy submission to such a dispensation as this, ye would be much in the consideration from what fountain your repinings and murmurings doth proceed, what is the rise and original of them, and from which they spring. Is it not rather from a principle of pride, than from a principle of love to, and delight in God? From a principle of self-estimation, rather than from a principle of longing for Jesus Christ, and sorrow for his withdrawing himself from you? (The evil of Diotrophes desiring the pre-eminence amongst the brethren) it is frequent amongst us: coveting to be, as one said, *Aut Cesar, aut nihil;* we desire either to be singular and matchless, or else to be nothing. We

confess, if a Christian did seriously ponder these things, and meditate upon them, certainly he might blush and be ashamed of his own folly: he might cover his face with confusion, and not dare to look up.

But, however, we would desire you, (even you) that in some reality and sincerity of heart have gone about this most precious and most blessed exercise of the grace of prayer, that ye may now begin to renew your diligence, 'and to add to your diligence, faith; and to your faith, virtue;' and to comfort yourselves with this, that there is an everlasting rest prepared for you in heaven above, which is not like the feast of Ahasuerus, 'that lasted for an hundred fourscore and four days;' but this blessed feast shall last throughout all the ages of long and endless eternity. Believe it, it shall be a blessed and everlasting feast, it shall be an everlasting feast of love. It shall be a feast that shall not be capable of any period nor end, nor yet shall know of any lothing. There is no satiety, neither any lothing in heaven. And O! may not this comfort you in your journey, and incite and provoke your desires to follow after him, who is altogether desirable, and altogether lovely, and 'that bright and morning star.'

And likewise, I would say this to you, even to you who are atheists and strangers to this precious exercise of the duty of prayer: I think it were complete misery to you, if there were no more, but that ye are strangers to it, even to the exercise of this duty of prayer: for we think the exercise of godliness, it is a reward to itself, as we may say that word, *Pietas sibi præmium*. It is such an inconceivable and excellent a thing, that it is a reward to them whosoever have it; and, O! will not your hearts be prevailed with to fall in love with such a rare and excellent exercise, even with the exercise of godliness, which, we conceive, is *profitable for all things*? And O! will ye make it your study to pray to God, and to be in the exercise of godliness, without which ye shall never see God; without which ye shall never be admitted to behold him (the beholding of whom is the exercise of all the saints, and of all the souls of just men now made perfect, and of all those precious thousands that are now about this glorious throne), and without the exercise of which, these feet of yours shall never be admitted to stand within the blessed gates of that precious city, even the city of *the new Jerusalem, where all the redeemed of the Lord are*? and without the exercise of which, ye shall be eternally and undoubtedly undone, if ye want godliness, ye shall undergo the pains of hell, and the torments of the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; and the day is coming when that curse (that sad curse)

shall be sadly accomplished upon you, which is in Deut. xxviii. 34. 'Thou shalt be mad, for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt behold, and when the Lord shall smite thee with an evil that thou canst not be healed of, even from the sole of thy foot to the crown of thy head, and thou shalt become an astonishment, and a proverb unto all nations whithersoever the Lord shall carry thee, and thou shalt be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and thou shalt flee seven ways before them: and thy carcase shall be meat unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field, and none shall fray them away; and all these things shall come upon thee till thou be destroyed.'

O atheists! what a terrible and dreadful sight shall it be, when ye shall behold those black and hideous everlasting chains, that shall once be wreathed about your cursed necks? O! to be thinking that ere long ye are to dwell and take up your everlasting prison, out of which there is no redemption again; and the door of the prison-house is sealed with the seal of the King, which is an unchangeable and unalterable decree. O! if the apprehensions and thoughts of this could once provoke and stir you up to pity your own precious and immortal souls, (with which there is no exchange). Oh! what a woful and marvellous stupidity and hardness of heart hath overtaken the people of this present generation, that go to hell with as much delight and ease, as if they were going to heaven? Oh! that your spirits were once awakened from your security, that ye might perceive the woful and miserable condition that ye are lying under. O Christian! what are ye resolved to do? Are ye not afraid that ye shall be benighted with your work? O! shall the sufferings of these pains first resolve you, and clear you of the sadness and inextricable sorrows that are in the bottomless pit? Now to him who is that blessed Master of assemblies, who can fix these words as nails in your hearts, and who can prove them therein, to his blessed and holy name we desire to give praise.

SERMON IV.

1 Thess. v. 17. *Pray without ceasing.*

We desire to commend the blessed and precious estate of those that are now exalted above the reach of this blessed exercise, and who have now made a blessed and precious exchange, that instead of 'praying without ceasing, they are now praising without ceasing.' And O! beloved of the Lord, (if so we may call

you) whither is that blessedness gone which you did speak of, *the enjoyment and fruition of Christ;* so that if he would have required it of you, 'you would have plucked out your right eyes, and given them to him?' O! is he become less precious, that your respects to him are so much impaired? Was it not once your divine and blessed lot, that ye could not have lived one day without the enjoyment of him, in whose face your eternal blessedness doth lie? O! but absence and estrangement from him is thought a dispensible want in these days; and that which is the ground of the expostulation, is, that ye are so little in giving obedience unto his blessed and precious command, 'Pray without ceasing.' Yea, if the stones and wall of this house, and if the rafters thereof could speak, they might utter this complaint upon many inhabitants of this city, *that they do not watch unto prayer*, and are not exercising themselves in the entertaining a divine and precious correspondence with heaven. Oh, whither is the exercise of that precious duty of prayer gone? O! how independent are we in our talk with God? O! when did you taste so much of his sweetness, that when ye did reflect upon it, ye were forced to say, 'did not our hearts burn within us while he spake with us?' When did ye cast an indissolvable knot of love upon your hands, which ye hoped eternity could not loose nor dissolve? I wonder that this is not a question which we do not more debate, how much undervaluers of communion and fellowship with God here below, (who can live many days without seeing the sun or stars, without beholding of him) can walk with such woful contentment? O! can such a delusion overtake you as this, that ye can reign as kings without Christ, and be rich and full without his fulness! It were, no doubt, the special advantage of a Christian, to be retiring from all things that are below; and to be inclosing himself in a sconce, in a blessed and divine contemplation of that invisible Majesty, and to have our souls united unto him by a threefold cord, which is not easily broken.

But now to come to the words, the next thing which we intend to speak to from this, is, to know what is the most compendious way to keep your souls in life, and to have them flourishing as a watered garden in the exercise of prayer, we shall say these four things unto you.

First, Be much in the exercise of the grace of fear when ye go to pray, that ye may have high and reverent apprehensions of that glorious and terrible Majesty before whom ye pray: there is a precious promise for this in Isa. lx. 5. 'Thou shalt fear and be enlarged,' &c. O! but our atheism (and our having that inscription engraven on all our duties, *worshipping an unknown*

God), maketh us to have so little access unto him, and taste so little of that sweetness, that causeth the lips of those that are asleep to speak. How oftentimes go ye to prayer, and are no more in the exercise of fear, than if ye were to speak to one that is below you? Those glorified spirits that are now about his throne, O! with what reverence and fear do they adore him? And if it be the practice of the higher house, why ought it not to be the practice of this lower house?

Secondly. If ye would attain to enlargement in the exercise of prayer, ye would be much in paying those vows that you have made to God when ye were enlarged. I am persuaded of this, that our making inquiry after vows, and our deferring to pay them, say in our practice, (before the angel) it was an error, it doth, no doubt, obstruct our access and liberty to God; these two are conjoined together, paying of vows and access to God, Job xxii. 27. 'Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, (which is access) and thou shalt pay thy vows.' Are there not many of us that decree many things without ourselves, that are not established by God? O! when shall our resolutions and our practice be of like equal extent?

There is a *third* thing we would give you as a compendious way to attain to the exercise of prayer, and enlargement in it, be much in the exercise of fervency, ah! when we go to prayer under bonds and straitenings, we take liberty to ourselves to abbreviate and cut short our prayers. O! do we not know what a blessed practice this is, to wrestle with God, were it until the dawning of the day, *and not to let him go till he bless us*? What was it that made way to Jacob's enlargement, was it not his seriousness and fervency? And these two are often conjoined in the Psalm, 'I cried and he heard me;' the one importing his fervency, and the other his access. Our prayers, for the most part, die before we win up to heaven, they proceed with so little zeal and fervency from us. This was the saying of a holy man, 'That he never went from God, without God, that ay where he left him, he knew where to find him again.' It is a saying that many of us doth not so much as endeavour to attain to, alas! we may say, that sin of neutrality and indifferency in prayer hath slain its ten thousands of enjoyments, when our sins (in prayer) hath but slain their thousands.

There is a *fourth* thing which we shall speak unto, as the most compendious way to attain enlargement in the exercise of prayer, and it is this, ye would be under a deep and divine impression of these things that ye are to speak of to God in the exercise of prayer, either to have your spirits under an impression of sorrow, or an impression of joy. In a manner, a Christian ought

to speak his prayer to his heart, before he spake it to God; and if we speak no more than what our hearts do indite, our prayer would not be long; and we should eschew these vain and needless repetitions that we use in the exercise of that duty of prayer. O! but we are exceeding rash with our mouths, and hasty with our spirits in uttering things before God. Almost we never go to prayer, but if we had so much grace to reflect upon it, we might be convinced of this, that we have uttered things that have not been fit to be uttered unto God; as when ye speak of your burdens and crosses, which you never did seriously premeditate upon; and likewise speak of these things, as your joy, in which ye did never rejoice. O! conceive ye him to be altogether such an one as yourself, that such a woful cursed practice and delusion as this should overtake you? If a Christian would study before he go to prayer, to imprint and engrave his desires and petitions upon his heart, he might have more liberty and access in the proposing of them unto God.

Now we shall shut up our discourse upon this noble grace and duty of prayer, with this, to speak a little unto the answers and returns of prayer.

And the *first* thing that we shall speak upon this subject, is, what can be the reason that the Christians in these days are so little expecting, and waiting for the return and answer of their prayers? For do we not oftentimes pray, and yet do not know what it is to wait for an answer and return to these prayers of ours? This exercise, which is so much undervalued by us, the want of it doth, no doubt, prove that marvellous decay that is in the work of a Christian's graces. And we conceive, that the little waiting for the return and answer to prayer, doth proceed from the want of the solid faith, and of the absolute necessity that we stand in of those things that we pray to God for; (for strong necessities make strong desires, and earnest expectations) but we may say, that our necessities die with our petitions: we should be more in waiting for, and expecting the returns of our prayers.

There is this likewise, that is the reason of that woful practice, we have not a lively and deep impression of the burden of these things which we would have removed by God: as when one is praying for the removing of some lusts, and some pregnant and predominant evil, and yet never cares whether it be removed or not, and the reason of this which makes us wait for, and expecting so little the answer and return of our prayers, is, because we are not groaning under the yoke and burden, as though it were unsupportable, but walking lightly under that yoke and heavy burden, and therefore we wait not for the an-

swers of our prayers: we look upon our chains and fetters of iniquities, as though they were chains of gold and fetters of silver: and so it is no wonder that we are not much in the expectation and waiting of our return of prayer, and to have these chains and fetters taken off us.

And there is this likewise, which is the occasion of our little waiting for an answer to our prayers, we have not a right apprehension and uptaking of the preciousness and excellencies of those things that we seek from God: we do not know and understand what advantage should flow to us from the having of these things that we seek, and what marvellous disadvantage shall flow to us from the want of them. O! but the people of this present generation, wherein we now live, have put a low rate upon the things of religion, which are of everlasting and soul-concernment; even those things that were accounted most precious and excellent by all those that have gone before us, and have taken up their possessions and eternal abode in that blessed land which is above. There is one thing which we undervalue and set at nought, and that is, our communion and fellowship with God. We are indifferent in having of it, and care not whether we have it or not, which maketh us not earnestly to press after the pursuing of it. O Christians! be persuaded of it, that there are these three disadvantages that follow unto a Christian that is not much in waiting for the answer and return of his prayer after he hath prayed.

The *first* disadvantage is this, it is a compendious way to win to formality in the duty of prayer. I will not say, that one which doth not always wait for an answer to his prayer, that he cannot pray in the Spirit, and in sincerity and fervency; but I need not be afraid to say this, that he who is not so much in the exercise of waiting for a return and answer to his prayer, he prays little to purpose: and it may be demonstrated, and clearly shown by this reason: Can ye be serious in the accomplishing of the means, if ye do not propose some end and design before your eyes why ye do so? Now, what is the end and scope that ye propose before yourselves in your going about the exercise of that duty of prayer? I confess, we ought to go about it, not only as a help and mean to remove our evil, and to obtain our advantages, but likewise we ought to go about it as a duty incumbent on us: but if we go not about the duty of prayer under both these considerations, and except we wait for the return and answer, certainly we pray not aright.

There is a *second* disadvantage, which a Christian hath that doth not wait for the answer and return of his prayer, and it is, he loseth many sweet experiences of the love and good will of

God towards him. It is no wonder that many of us do not receive much from God, the reason of it is, because we are not expecting and waiting for much from him. I will not say, but a Christian, that is not much in the exercise of waiting, may sometimes obtain the answer and return of his prayers; but we may say these things to such persons, if your prayers be answered, and ye have not waited for the return and answer of them, surely ye lose much sweetness and preciousness of the answer of your prayers. There is this likewise which we would say to such persons as these, if a Christian's prayer be answered, when he doth not wait for the answer of it, then the Christian cannot so resolutely build his faith upon such an experience, to believe that God again will answer his prayers, as if he had been waiting upon a return.

There is this *third* disadvantage that follows a Christian who is not much in the exercise of waiting for the return and answer to his prayer, and it is, he cannot continue long in a praying frame. I conceive that the most fit and compendious way for a Christian to keep his spirit in a holy and divine correspondence with God, is to have it in a holy and fit capacity to converse with God; this is a way to be much in the exercise of waiting for the return and answer of prayer. It is a sweet exercise to be expecting and waiting *till the vision shall speak* to you.

Now, are there not many here, who, if they were posed with this question, when were ye put to the serious exercise of waiting for the return and answer of your prayers, after ye have prayed? I am persuaded of it, ye should find it a difficulty to fall upon the number of the days wherein ye were taken up in this exercise. I think, that which doth so plainly demonstrate that woful formality and dreadful indifferency that is amongst us, (in going about the exercise of this duty of prayer) is this, we do not wait for the answers and returns of our prayers from God. O Christians! are ye so perfectly complete? Or have ye already attained to the full stature of one in Christ, that ye do not wait for the answers and returns of your prayers, that so ye may receive more from God?

And I would say this to these atheists and strangers to God, who never knew what it was to wait for an answer and a return to their prayers; and are there not many such here, who, if their consciences were now posed, when they did wait for a return to their prayers, they might (if they speak the truth) say, that they did never wait for an answer to their prayers? I say to such, that they did never pray aright.

Now the *second* thing which we shall speak upon the returns and answers of prayer is, how a Christian may come to the dis-

tinct knowledge of this, that his prayers are heard and answered. A thing indeed, we confess, that many of us are not much taken up with, we not being in the exercise to know such a thing.

And *first*, There is a difference betwixt the hearing of prayer and of getting a return and answer to prayer; God, in the depth of his unsearchable wisdom, may sometimes hear our prayers, and yet make a long time to intervene before he give the sensible return and answer of that prayer; this is clear from Dan. x. 12. 13. where it is said of Daniel, 'That from the first day that he afflicted his soul, his prayers and supplications were heard;' and yet it is one and twenty days before the answer and return of his prayers did come. These are two distinct mercies to the Christian, the hearing of his prayer, and receiving the answer and return of his prayer, which he hath prayed for; and it is clear from Psalm xxxiv. 6. 'This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.'

We shall say this, *secondly*, That there is a great and vast difference betwixt the returns of prayer, and the delays of the returns of it; and yet it were a bad inference to infer, that God doth deny to give us the answer of our prayers, though he delay them a while; or to say, that we can have no answer at all; though we confess, that is the common place from which Christians do bring all their arguments to prove that their prayers are not heard, even the delay of the answer and return of their prayers: and this is clear from Rev. vi. 10, 11. where the souls of those that are crying to God for revenge of their blood upon the earth, their prayer is heard; and yet withal they are desired to stay a little, until their brethren (that are to be slain) shall be fulfilled, and then their prayers shall be fulfilled; and accomplished unto them.

There is this, *thirdly*, That we shall speak to, and it is this, that sometimes our prayers may be both heard and answered, and yet we shall not believe that it is so, when we are waiting for the distinct and solid apprehension of this mercy: and we conceive that this is rather occasioned through the greatness of affliction upon a Christian, and the continuance of his stroke; as is evidently clear from Job ix. 16, 17. where Job saith, 'If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to my voice.' And he gives this to be the reason of it, 'For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause.' Or this may be the reason of it likewise, Why? when our prayers are both heard and answered, we believe not that it is so; and it is this, because of the want of the exercise of waiting for an answer, and that we are not much taken

up in expecting a return from God to our prayers; therefore when our prayers are heard and answered, we cannot believe that it is so.

There is this *fourth* thing which we will speak to concerning the returns of prayer, that the prayers and petitions of a Christian, even while he is under the exercise of misbelief, they may be heard and taken off his hand; as is clear from Psalm cxvi. 11, 12. 'I said in my haste, all men are liars;' but there is a sweet and precious experience which followeth that, 'What shall I render to the Lord, for all his benefits towards me?' And this is clear from Jonah, Jon. ii. 4. compared with verse 7. where he saith, 'I am cast out of thy sight,' and yet in verse 7. 'When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came in unto thee into thy holy temple.'

Now, to give some answer to the question which we proposed, how one may know whether or not his prayers be answered? *first*, If a Christian be enlarged and enabled to go on in duty, though he do not receive a sensible manifestation of the grace and acceptation of his prayer, but (in a manner) he is denied the answer and return of it, yet if he do attain to such a length as to *pray without ceasing*, and to have strength to accomplish this duty of prayer, that is (no doubt) a clear token and evidence that our prayers and supplications are heard by God, and in his own appointed time these prayers of yours shall be answered; and this is clear in Psalm cxxx. 2. where David giveth this as a token and evidence that his prayers were heard and answered, 'in the day when I cried, thou answeredst me.' And what is the argument that he bringeth to prove this, that his prayer was answered? It is this, 'And strengthenest me with strength in my soul.' Certainly it is a bad sign, and an evil token, that your prayers are not heard: if, because he denieth your suit and petition for a time, ye leave off the exercise of the duty of prayer, and faint in the day of your adversity.

There is a *second* thing by which ye may know, whether or not your prayers have met with a return and answer from God, and it is this, if your prayers be suitable unto his own word, and agreeable unto his holy and most divine will and pleasure, then ye may be persuaded of this, that God heard your prayers; that is abundantly clear from 1 John iii. 14. 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.' Certainly it is difficult and exceeding hard, we confess, for a Christian to exercise faith upon the sure word of prayer, abstracting from all other grounds. But if we would have our faith elevated and raised to so divine a pitch, we would believe this precious truth, 'That whatsoever we ask

according to his will, he heareth us;' and that he will answer our supplications, therefore will we wait patiently and faithfully upon God.

There is this *third* thing whereby you may know whether or not your prayers be heard, and it is this, if ye have delight and spiritual joy in the exercise of this blessed duty of prayer, though ye have not the return and answer of your prayers, yet it is an evidence and token that your prayers are heard, and you shall shortly have an answer given to them; and when ye lose your delight in duties, which ye once attained to, then ye may be afraid. There is somewhat of this hinted at in Job xxvii. 9, 10, where Job gives this as a reason and ground, that he will not hear the prayer and supplication of the hypocrite, 'because he delighteth not himself in the Almighty;' inferring this much, that if he would delight himself in God, then he would hear his prayer, and give him a return and answer to it.

There is a *fourth* thing whereby you may know whether or not your prayers are heard and answered, and it is this, when your sadness and anxiety (about that which ye were asking from God in prayer) is removed and taken away; this is clear from 2 Sam. i. 18. where this is given as an evidence, that Hannah was heard in her prayer and supplication, 'because her countenance was no more sad.' And certainly, when our prayers have such a return, then we may know distinctly, that they are answered by the Lord.

And the *fifth* thing that we would propose to you, whereby you may know whether or not your prayers have met with a return and answer from God is, if ye pray, making use of Jesus Christ, as a blessed days-man, to interpose himself betwixt the Father and you; then ye may be persuaded of this, that your prayers are heard: this is clear, where it is twice repeated, John xiv. 13, 14. 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, ye shall receive it.' Believe it, he can deny you nothing that you seek from him, if you ask it in faith.

Now that which, *thirdly*, We shall speak to upon the return of prayer, is this, to these things which doth obstruct the hearing of our prayers, why they are not answered by him; so that oftentimes, when we pray to him, 'he shutteth out our prayer from him, and covereth himself with a cloud, so that our prayers cannot pass through.' O! but if that duty and precious counsel which Hezekiah gave to Isaiah, Isa. xxxvii. 4. which truly is worthy to be engraven on our hearts, 'Lift up thy prayer, &c. which doth import, that it was a weighty thing, which would require much seriousness in the going about it. I say, if that worthy counsel were obeyed, we should not have need to pre-

pose these obstructions, and to complain of God's ways. Now we shall speak to these obstructions which hinder us.

First, Hypocrisy which we have in the exercise of prayer: O! but we pray much with our judgment, when we pray not much with our affections; that is, our light will cry out, crucify such a lust; and our affections will cry out again, hold thy hand. It is a difficulty to have the spirit of a Christian brought such a length, as to have his judgment and affections of a like measure and extent; Job giveth this as a reason why God will not hear a hypocrite's prayer, Job xxvii. O! even because he is not constant: there is a woful disagreement betwixt what we speak, and what we think; we speak many things with our mouth, which our hearts sometimes witness that we would not have God granting us: (in a manner) our affections are a protestation against the return of many of our prayers: our idols are so fixed in our hearts, that we spare Agag the king of our lusts, though there be given out a commandment from the Lord to destroy all these: and it may oftentimes speak that the bitterness of death is past out against us, seeing we do oftentimes spare them contrary to his blessed command.

There is a *second* thing which obstructs the exercise of prayer, and it is, that woful and cursed end that we propose to ourselves in going about that duty; this is clear in James iv. 3. 'Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.' O! that woful idolatry that Christians do entertain in the exercise of prayer. That glorious and inconceivable attribute of God, of being *Alpha* and *Omega*, which we do sacrilegiously attribute to ourselves, in making ourselves the beginning of our prayers, and the end of them also: it hinders much our return of prayer. Certainly those woful ends that we spake of in the beginning of our discourse, (and all along in it) doth, no doubt, marvellously obstruct the answers of our prayers.

Now the *last* thing that we shall speak upon the return of prayer, shall be to some advantages which a Christian may have from this, that his prayers are answered, and that he hath received a return from the Lord. Believe me, there is more love in the answer of one prayer, than eternity could make a commentary upon: O! what love is in this, that he should condescend to hear our prayers? That such a glorious and infinite Majesty should (in a manner) condescend to bow down his ear to take notice of these petty desires that we propose unto him? And there are these five advantages that a Christian may have from this.

First, It is an excellent way to keep the grace of love in ex-

ercise; this is clear in Psalm cxix. 1. 'I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.' O! but love in some hath eminently taken fire, when they have reflected upon this, that their prayers are heard.

There is this *second* advantage that a Christian hath, from the return and answer of his prayer, it is an excellent motive and persuasion to make us constant and frequent in the exercise of prayer; this is clear in Psalm cxvi. 2. where he reflecteth upon the hearing of his voice, 'Therefore I will call upon him as long as I live.' I am persuaded of this, that our little exercise of prayer doth much proceed from this, that we wait not for a return of prayer; and therefore oftentimes it is, that we do not receive a return. Believe me, there is more joy and divine satisfaction to be found in the solid and spiritual convictions of this, that our prayers are heard, than we will have in the exercise of many prayers that we pray.

There is a *third* advantage that a Christian hath, from the return and answer of his prayer, it is an evident token from the Lord, that his prayer is accepted by him, when a Christian can read his reconciliation by the gracious return of his prayer, and that he is in a gracious estate and condition: and O! is not that a great advantage? We confess God may hear the prayers of the wicked for the mercies that are common; but the hearing of a real Christian's prayer, both in mercies common and spiritual, proveth that his person is accepted by God; we must be accepted of him through Jesus Christ, before that he can have pleasure in our sacrifice; and is not this a precious advantage, to read your adoption upon the returns and answers of your prayer from God? May not the Christian say, when he meets with such a return and answer of his prayer, 'Now I am persuaded, that I am begotten unto a lively hope, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication?' In a manner, it is a character wherein you may read your interest and infeftment in that precious and most blessed inheritance that is above. O! if there were no more to provoke you to wait for the return and answer of your prayers nor this, it may be sufficient unto many of these debates and disputings that you have about your interest in Jesus Christ. And O! may not this argument provoke you to love him?

The *fourth* advantage, that comes to the Christian from the consideration of the return and answer of his prayer is, it is a compendious way to make us desist from the committing of iniquity: hence is that word in Psalm vi. 8. where, upon the consideration of the hearing of his prayer, he breaketh out in that saying, 'Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.' In a manner

speaking so much, that he would have nothing to do with such ones as they were.

Lastly, The return and answer of prayer, is an excellent way to keep our faith in exercise, it is a sweet experience of the love of God, upon which we may build our hope in the darkest night, even to call to mind these things that he hath given to us in former days. Certainly a holy and divine reflection upon these things, might persuade us that he will not shut up his tender and loving mercies unto an everlasting forgetfulness.

Now to close up our discourse upon this noble duty and grace of prayer, we shall desire this one thing of you, 'Who are begotten unto a lively and precious hope,' that you may be more in that noble exercise: I may say, that there is no sin which a Christian shall be more deeply convinced of, in that day when his feet shall stand upon the utmost line of time, as this sin of the neglect of the duty of prayer. And we confess, God may reprove many, 'that they bind heavy burdens on men's shoulders, that are grievous to be borne, and do not so much themselves as touch them with one of their fingers.

Now, however, seriously enlarge your hearts unto this blessed exercise; for believe me, it is the way (if so we may speak) to bring down heaven upon earth. But alas! I am afraid, that this duty of prayer is not much now in practice amongst many of us in these days: is not prayer, that noble duty, almost laid by us in this evil and perverse generation, as a thing unsavoury? Oh! that ye had now a divine anticipation of that glorious enjoyment of him, which ye shall have throughout all the ages of eternity, if you be serious in this exercise. Oh! may we not walk mournfully many days in the bitterness of our souls, because we are no more in the exercise of secret prayer? O! whither is your devotions gone in these days? O! whither is it gone? I am afraid, that if these that have lived before in ancient days were now alive, doubtless they would be ignorant of us, and they would not acknowledge us for Christians. I would say this for these who never seriously practised this duty as yet, of which number there are many, O! but prayer be another thing than the most part of you conceive it to be. I think it is not only mysterious in its nature, to conceive how the spirit of man can converse with him that is the Father of spirits, how there should intervene a communion and fellowship betwixt such two. It is a mystery and riddle surely, which we cannot easily unfold. But withal, this is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation, that the exercise and practice of prayer is grown as mysterious as the nature of it. O! but there are many of you, that suppose ye are praying aright, and therefore you think all is well, who

shall be cut off as those that never prayed. I conceive, if we believe all that is spoken upon this exercise of prayer, what divine properties are requisite to a Christian, that would seriously go about the exercise of this precious duty, we might cry out, 'This is a hard saying, who can bear it?' And certainly, it is altogether impossible for us, though it be not impossible to God, to enlarge our hearts to pursue it; 'for with him nothing is impossible.' O! that if once ye might be persuaded to set about the exercise of this precious and most excellent duty of prayer, which will be to your eternal advantage, and soul everlasting concernment. I am afraid, (O Christians) that if one from heaven (who have entered unto these everlasting and blessed possessions of that excellent and blessed estate of life) would come down to earth, (if so with reverence we may speak) and preach upon this text of ours, 'Pray without ceasing;' and speak of these precious and unspeakable advantages which do accompany the man that is much in the exercise of prayer; there be many of us, I fear, would scarcely be inclined to hear such an exhortation. And more than this, if one from the dead would arise, and come from the pit unto this city, and preach upon this text unto you, 'Pray without ceasing, having the chains of everlasting wrath hanging about his neck, and preach upon these sad and unspeakable disadvantages, which are to be found in the neglect of this blessed exercise of this duty of prayer, and should desire you to flee from that wrath that is to come: O! would there not be many of you, (I am afraid) who would stop your ears, and would not listen unto the voice and language of such an exhortation? Oh! where are many of us going? Whither are we going? Certainly the apprehensions and thoughts of everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord, is not much engraven and deeply imprinted upon the spirits of hypocritical Christians of this generation, we are not afraid of that wrath and eternal destruction which is approaching unto us.

But to you that are heirs of the promise, who are heirs of the grace of life, and who are begotten again unto a lively hope, I would say this unto you, 'Pray without ceasing,' and once you shall sing without ceasing, and without all interruption. And to these that pray not, the day is coming, when they shall howl in that bottomless pit, amongst those everlasting flames of fire and brimstone, when they shall be brayed in the mortar of the wrath of God, by the pestil of his severe justice; when his Omnipotency shall uphold you, and his justice shall smite you eternally. Oh! it were many of your advantages, that you were (indeed) beasts without immortal souls; for to have souls, doth capacitate you for an eternal being, and for an eternal punishment.

THREE SERMONS

CONCERNING

The Way how a CHRISTIAN ought to keep his HEART.

SERMON I.

PROV. iv. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

WE conceive, if there were a window opened in each one of our bosoms, through which each one of us that are here, might behold one anothers hearts, we would become monsters and wonders one of us to another, and to ourselves likewise, and might cry out, "O! where is the God of judgment, that takes not vengeance on such deceitful hearts?" If our hearts were turned out of us, (so to speak) and we saw the inside of our hearts, we would wonder at his patience. I think, such is the desperate deceitfulness of our hearts, that if all the saints since Adam's days, and shall be to the end of the world, had but one heart to guide, I think they would misguide it. I would only say this to believers, that if your hearts were left one hour to yourselves to keep, ye would commit more iniquity than ye can imagine or dream of. There is only these four things that I would speak to before I come to the words, and I would request you to take notice of them:

And, *first*, There are many of us that have two hearts in our bosom, for such an one is the hypocrite, James i. 8. 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways;' that is, a man that hath two hearts, a part of his heart goeth to God, and a part of his heart goeth to the devil. And I think, if we were all well searched, it is to be feared that many of us would be found two-hearted men.

Secondly, That although ye would give Christ all your members, yet if you would not give him your heart, it would be nothing thought of; if you would give him your eyes, so that you would not look to your idols pleasantly, nor yet look with delight upon any cursed or sinful object; and if you would give him your ears, so that you could, nor would not hearken to the voice of any of your temptations, 'but be as deaf as an adder unto them;' and if you would give him your tongue, so

that you should not speak any thing dishonourable to him; and if you would give him your feet, so that you should not walk in any way, but in an approven path of godliness: now, I say, although you would give him all these members of your body, yet if ye give him not your heart, it is all to no purpose, Prov. xxiii. 26. 'My son, give me thy heart, &c.'

Thirdly, There are many which give their hearts to their idols, and their tongues to Christ, but one day they shall be found to be but deceivers.

Lastly, It is a noble thing for a Christian to be taken up in the keeping of his heart. I may say this of the heart, which the apostle James said of the tongue, 'It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison,' James iii. 8. The heart is taken up with whoring from God, and with contriving the way how to satisfy its lusts, and continually forsaking the living God. Our hearts are doing nothing in all our lifetime, (many of us) but profaning his holy name, and blaspheming the God of Jacob.

Now to come to the words, there are four things therein, *First*, the duty imposed upon a Christian, and that is, 'To keep his heart.' *Secondly*, That the heart of man hath many seekers, which is imported in that word, *keep*. *Thirdly*, You have the qualification and way how a Christian should keep his heart, which are rendered in these words, *with all diligence*; or, as the words may be rendered, 'with all keeping.' And, *lastly*, The reasons why you should do so, 'for out of it are the issues of life:' for if you do so, you shall have life; but if not, from thence are the issues of death. Now from the first thing in the words, ye would consider these two things.

First, That it is a duty incumbent on every Christian, 'to keep his heart;' this is clear, not only from our text, but likewise in Deut. iv 9. 'Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, &c. Prov xxiii. 26. 'Guide thy heart in the way.' Which is, study to keep it diligently in the way of godliness. And it is clear likewise that a Christian ought 'to keep his heart,' for the great advantages that are holden out in scripture for so doing; only take one place, in Prov. xvi. 22. 'Better is he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.'

The *second* thing that I would say to point out the woful disadvantages that wait upon him that rules not his own heart, but gives it leave to rove here and there is, Prov. xxv. 28. 'He that hath not rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.' And there are these two disadvantages that wait upon not keeping of the heart. 1. There is no temptation that assaults a heart that is not kept, but they become victorious: spiritual strength hath forsaken them that keep not

their hearts. 2. There is no exercise nor duty that a Christian is employed in, which keeps not his heart, but he is like a ruinous city which hath no walls, and in which there is no order.

Now, the next thing that I would speak to is, to shew what it imports to keep the heart, and what are the directions and ways which a Christian ought to have before him in the exercise and duty of keeping his heart.

And, *First*, It imports this, that a Christian should observe the motions of his heart, and should not let his heart nor thoughts go astray, but should have a register of all their motions; as is clear in Luke xxi. 34. "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

The *second* thing which keeping of the heart includes is, you must keep all the things that pertain to your hearts; and there are these five things which ye must keep: *First*, Your thoughts, you must keep your thoughts so straitly, that you must not give them any sinful latitude in the least manner. *Secondly*, A Christian, he must keep his eyes, which are the windows through which much wickedness is conveyed to the soul, Prov. xxiii. 26. 'My son give me thy heart,' &c. Prov. iv. 25. 'Let thine eye look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee.' As if Solomon had said, 'It is but foolishness to keep your hearts, if ye keep not your eyes.' *Thirdly*, Ye must keep your tongues, that they speak no evil of the ways of godliness; for so are the words following the text, 'Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.' Which is, order thy tongue. *Fourthly*, You must keep your feet, that ye walk not in the paths of wickedness: if once you gave a latitude to your feet to go in the way to hell, it shall be but in vain to keep your hearts: therefore keep your feet from running to the murder of your souls. *Lastly*, Ye must keep your ears, ye should delight to speak good of godliness, and should also delight to hear good spoken of it: ye should not be among these that savour of nothing but of sin, but ye should be amongst these that savour of good: therefore, as ye would not be accessary to the murder of your own souls, and as ye would not have the blood of them lying upon your heads, ye must needs keep all these parts that belong to the keeping of your hearts aright.

The *third* thing which the keeping of your heart includes is, to eschew all unclean things that may defile your hearts, Prov. v. 8. 'Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.' When you see any evil thing approaching, you must depart from it, and eschew it, Deut. xii. 30. 'Take

head to thyself, that thou be not snared. There are many snares that may be accessary to destruction: and there is this that Moses marks as a chief evil, and likewise oftentimes forbids in this book, to have false 'weights and balances,' Lev. xix. 22. Deut. xxv. 15. They are not only sinful of themselves, but because they are an appearance of evil, they should eschew them; therefore he forbids them: and the apostle bids us likewise abstain from all appearance of evil,' 1 Thess. v. 22.

The *fourth* thing which keeping of the heart includes is, to put restraints upon your hearts that so you may not commit iniquity; ye ought first to lay the bond of Christ's love upon yourselves; ye should likewise lay the bond of judgment upon yourselves, knowing that once God shall call you to a reckoning for all your wickedness, which now most wickedly you commit; and you ought to lay the bonds of God's omnisciency upon yourselves, to know and consider that all things are known to him, and that he seeth all things; and ye ought likewise to consider how grievous, and how displeasing a thing sin is to the majesty of God, that man, who is the workmanship of his hand, should rise up against him: we may say that of ourselves which is in Lam. iii. 22. 'It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not, they are fresh every morning,' &c. All these things a Christian ought to lay to heart, and seriously to consider them.

The *second* thing which keeping of the heart includes is, a Christian ought not to slight the opportunities given unto him for the strengthening of his grace: for they which slight opportunities, keep not their own hearts.

The *last* thing which it imports is, that a Christian should be much in the diligent exercise of duties, that the heart may be kept and holden in a notable frame. And there is two exercises which a Christian ought to be diligent in: *first*, The exercise of prayer. *Secondly*, The exercise of watching. There is a fivefold frame which a Christian should be in, which would rightly keep his heart: *first*, In a frame of praying, that he should not be slack and coldrife to go about duties; the command thereof is holden out in that word, 'Watch and pray;' and also in that word, 'Pray without ceasing.' The *second* frame, should be a believing frame; and it is to be feared that there are not many such here; but that there are many walking in such a way and frame, which, alas! I fear, will lead them in the way to hell: if we were sincere, we would hold Christ fast, and would not let him go; and if our hearts were in a right frame, we would avoid any thing that might make him to depart from us. But, alas! we have many clear evidences (now-a-days) that we are not for Christ, we care

not whether we have his presence or want it; the want of his presence is as lightsome and pleasant to us, and as well taken with by many (I will not say all) as the enjoying of his presence: and this is a sure evidence of gross profaneness, ignorance, and estrangement from God, if there were no more to prove it but this, your stoutness of heart to meddle with sin, proves that you are unsound Christians. We would desire you, by all the torments of hell, and all the terrors of that everlasting lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone for ever and ever; by all the joys of heaven, of that higher house, that ye would carry a circumspect walk before God. The *third* frame that we would desire you to walk in is, a tender frame; and if so ye were walking, ye would be loath to commit sin wilfully, and woe shall be to them eternally which do so. We will not (many of us) believe this, although angels would preach it unto us, for our hearts are hard like an adamant stone. I would only say this to you, 'This book, this glorious book, is sealed with seven seals, and 'our hearts are sealed with fourteen seals.' O! woe be to those hard hearts that many of us have, we will never know until they run us eternally into the bottomless-pit.

The *fourth* frame that a Christian should walk in is, in a loving frame; ye ought to have your hearts burning within you with love towards that glorious, infinite, and mysterious object, Jesus Christ. We shall never be able to comprehend, nor recompense that love which he hath to us, for the furthest we can go, is to be sick of love to him. But O! he died with love for us, for he had so great love to us, that he laid down his life for us.

The *fifth* frame that a Christian should walk in is, a fearing frame; to walk under the fear of the hazard that you are in, if you be left to yourselves, and to your own strength: I may say, cursed be the person that never kept his heart in none of these five things that we have spoken of.

Now the *third* thing we would speak to from the words is, to know the times when a Christian should especially keep his heart; and there are six times when (I conceive) he should watch over his heart carefully and keep it.

1. After he hath met with some enjoyments, then he should keep his heart, and not let it go wrong.

2. The *second* time is, in the time of desertion; for that time is a wandering time from the living God.

3. A Christian should keep his heart, when he perceives his temptations to be very subtile.

4. And the *fourth* time is, to keep your hearts diligent in duties; for when ye are negligent in duties, then the devil is busy to get your hearts.

5. The *fifth* time is under a secure frame, then you should keep yourselves mightily.

6. And the *last* time is, when temptations are like to grow very strong, you should then at that time keep your hearts with a strong guard.

Now, as for the *first* time, viz. to keep it under enjoyments, we should then study to keep our hearts; for then, and at that time, the devil condescends to dandle us upon his knees, (if so we may speak) and for this we would give you some considerations.

The *first* consideration is, the heart of man is never prouder and proner to commit iniquity, than after enjoyments of God, he is never more prone to security, than after enjoyments; when was it that the spouse sleeped, but when she was full of joy? Song v. 3. 'I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on again?' &c. When was it that the disciples roved, but when they were on the mount, when they said, 'Let us make three tabernacles?' Matth. xvii. 14. And when was it that John committed idolatry? Was it not when he saw these excellent visions of heaven?

The *second* consideration is, that the stroke which is given by the devil after enjoyments, it is a very sad stroke, and hath caused many to say, 'Who can stand before the children of Anak?' And to draw that conclusion, 'I shall once fall by the hands of some of mine enemies.'

The *third* consideration is this, if a Christian embrace a temptation after enjoyments, it will be very hard for him to shake it off.

The *fourth* consideration is, that the embracing of a temptation after enjoyments, is a sin very hardly to be repented of, it will cost him many tears for repenting of it; for it is a hardening thing, which will harden his heart mightily under all sorts of sins which he can commit.

Fifthly, Consider this, that the embracing of a temptation after enjoyments, it is very displeasing to Christ, when ye embrace an idol, and prefer it before an absent Christ. O! that is a most dangerous sin. But when you embrace an idol after enjoyment, that is a damnable sin, for you prefer it to a present Christ, O! that is a fearful sin.

Now the *second* time when ye should keep your hearts is, when ye are going about the exercise of duties, and especially in the duty of prayer, and ye should keep it in four or five respects: *First*, In going about duties, and namely in prayer, ye are letting in vain thoughts, if your hearts be not well keeped. *Secondly*, The heart of a Christian is most ready to fall into the

sin of formality, and therefore if ye keep not your hearts well in duties, ye cannot but be formal in the performance of them. *Thirdly*, Our hearts, many times have too low thoughts and uptakings of the incomprehensible Majesty of God: the damnable ignorance which is amongst people, makes them get so little advantage in prayer; do you not speak to him, as to one of your fellow companions? Where is the exercise of fear, and of trembling, which Christians in old times used to have, as Moses, when he appeared and came before God? *Fourthly*, Our hearts are prone to misbelief, and ready always to misbelieve God, and his promises. *Lastly*, Except ye keep your hearts, it is impossible for you to take alongst with you your necessity: if one were standing by and heard your prayers, they would say, that you are not in earnest with God; for you seek such things from a principle of light, and not from necessity. Now, I would pose you with this, whether ever you have been observant in any of these duties or not? There are many whose prayers make them to have more distance with God; therefore I would request you to look to this, that ye be serious in prayer, and to know whether or not this be your frame; for there are some that will come from prayer with far more bonds on them, than when they began; and what is the reason of that, but want of fervency? It is a great mystery of his love, that he sends not fire from heaven to burn our sacrifice, and consume ourselves likewise: for what are many of our prayers, 'but, as it were, the cutting off of a dog's neck, which is an abomination unto the Lord?'

The *third* time when a Christian should especially keep his heart is, under desertion; and I shall give you three reasons why we should watch well at that time. *First*, The devil is busiest to seek our hearts under desertion. *Secondly*, The embracing of an idol under desertion, it is for that why God lengthens out the time of our lying under desertion so long, because we go to the bed of love with an idol when Christ is away. *Thirdly*, Because when a Christian hath least strength, he loseth both much of his faith and of his love. He maketh you then to look on the world, to be as tasteless as the white of an egg: ye must take that as a dispensation of Christ's love, that he makes all things tasteless to you under desertion. That is a noble dispensation, for by it he imposes a necessity upon you, to keep your hearts, till he return unto you again.

The *fourth* time when a Christian should keep his heart is, in a secure frame. I think there are some sleeping in a sleep of conscience, which will never awake till the screechings of the damned in hell awake them. I shall propose these two considerations to keep your hearts in security. 1. Because when ye

are secure, ye have then least strength; and is there not many amongst you that dare say, but that the devil then assaults you bitterly? And when your heart is lying in security, it speaks that ye are in a carnal frame. 2. If ye keep not your hearts when ye are secure, then ye may bid faith, love, and joy, farewel until some other time, as ye may see in the practice of Felix, 'Go away, and I will hear thee at another time,' Acts xxiv. 25. I would not desire a more sad case to an enemy, than not to keep his heart when he is under security, for he may bid the graces of the Spirit farewel until another time.

The *last* time when a Christian ought especially to keep his heart is, when strong and subtile temptations appear plausible, honest like, and beautiful, then ye must be upon your watch. O! do not temptations win in upon your hearts, before ever ye be aware? And this speaks much security and unwatchfulness. I would say, it is hard, yea, very hard to a Christian who is not watchful, to take up the ways of the devil, 'whose ways are more subtile than the way of an eagle in the air, or the way of a serpent upon a rock, or the way of a ship upon the sea. Who can comprehend his ways?' He tempts us always, both upon our right hand, and upon our left hand, both behind and before, both waking and sleeping, we are never free of his deceitful and unsearchable crafts. I would say this unto you, he is happy, that fears always, and hearkens to Christ's voice of direction in his word, depending upon him for strength; but many listen more to the voice of temptations, than to Christ's blessed voice.

Now, the next thing which I would speak to you is, to propose some considerations to press you to keep your hearts, and O! that ye would consider them, and lay them to heart.

The *first* consideration is this, I think many of us may be afraid, that the devil dwells and keeps possession in many of our hearts; and, alas! he is like to be a possessor of some of them perpetually. I will give five evidences of one, that by all appearance the devil hath his heart. And now, I charge you, (O atheists), in the name of our Lord and Saviour precious Christ, that ye would examine yourselves by them. *First*, Was never one of you convinced, to cry out that word in Psalm xxv 11. 'For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity: for it is very great?' I say to such persons, that were never convinced of this, and were never convinced of the hard difficulty to win to the right keeping of your hearts, by all appearance, the devil hath your hearts in keeping; for those whose hearts are in the hands of the devil, they are never sensible of their lost estate. *Secondly*, Those who never wan to make use of Christ, that is a token that the devil hath their hearts in keeping; there are many of us,

who are convinced of the vanity of our idols; but yet, alas! many of us drown our convictions with the sin of tipling, and bury them in the sepulchre of drunkenness: but believe it, if ye go on so, and continue therein, God will plead with you for the same. The *third* evidence is, one that hath a silent, hardened, and deceived conscience, and whose conscience is silent, by all appearance, the devil hath that person's heart in his hand; for the devil enticeth many to sin with greediness, and will make their conscience not to reprove them; so that they delight in no better, for he hath taken away the tongue of their conscience, so that they cannot speak; but believe me, the day is coming, when your conscience shall be the greatest foe and enemy that ye can or shall have. And believe it, there are many of you here who have your heart so hardened, as those that are mentioned, Eph. iv. 17. 18. 'Who walk in the vanity of their own mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.' Your conscience, when it is cauterized, it will not speak to you, although ye would commit that damnable 'sin against the Holy Ghost.' And ye think yourselves well enough when it doth not reprove you: but, alas! ye sleep with a false witness in your bosom, it hath many alluring delusions, but one day the words of it will be as sharp as swords; it will cry, 'Peace, peace, when behold sudden destruction:' it will make you sleep sound for all the danger that is hanging above you. Ye walk, (many of you) 'adding drunkenness to thirst.' O athiests! what will ye do, when that day shall come upon you, when these two books shall be opened? *First*, The book of your wanderings and backslidings, in which a huge innumerable troop of sins are written. And, *secondly*, the book of your conscience, and there can be nothing read out of that first book, but thy conscience shall confirm it with *Amen*.

The *second* consideration is, that if ye were to live eighty years, and though ye should weep and mourn forty of these years perpetually, if it could be possible, and pray other forty of these years, yet all that would be for nought, if ye will not give him your hearts. Believe me, if ye give not him your hearts, that sentence shall be pronounced upon you, *Depart*. O! will ye not give him your hearts, who ought to have them, both by creation and redemption?

The *third* consideration is, did ye never find any difficulty to believe, or to pray, or to love God? Ye may be persuaded of it, that ye are sleeping under a dangerous delusion, that ye think ye are going, and shall go to heaven, when ye shall be thurst down to hell. I would say this, "There hath been much joy

" amongst the devil and his angels, for the success which he hath " had in Glasgow:" he hath purchased many harpers to himself, who sing that cursed song, " I am not far from victory." I think we may turn that word into another way, which Christ said to his disciples, ' There is one of you twelve that shall betray me.' I think he may say otherwise of us, ' Eleven of each twelve that are here shall betray me.' O! it is sad, that the Son of God, even precious Christ, should have so many betrayers amongst us. O! therefore give Christ your hearts. Did ye never read that of Matth. xxv. 2. there were five wise virgins, and five foolish? And if there be of professors that shall be rejected, alas! what shall become of you that never knew him? ' And if the righteous scarcely be saved, O! what shall the ungodly and sinners do?

The *fourth* consideration is, I would propose these three things to you: *First*, What is the cause, O atheists! that ye cannot endure hypocrisy, why ye cannot look upon Christians? The cause is, they have not only the image and picture of Christ, but the very substance of Christ. Why hate ye not the rest of sins, as well as hypocrisy? It is, because the rest of sins look rather like the devil, and therefore ye love them; but hypocrites seem to have something of God in them, therefore ye hate them. *Secondly*, O athiests! do you believe that there is a heaven, and a hell, and an eternity of pain, and a day of judgment? If ye believed those things, ye would not be so profane. *Thirdly*, Did ye never find any delight in praising and commending of him? Your hearts saith, No; and your practice saith, No. O! woe, woe to you eternally.

The *fifth* consideration is, the day is approaching, when the least iniquity shall be preached in the hearing of angels and men, that every one committed, there shall not one jot of sin be passed by; and of all sinners, the hypocrites shall have the saddest countenance, because they shall be disappointed of a joyful end, and lose the opinion of the saints, which will make them to look with a sad countenance in that day. A hypocrite will be more moved for the loss of the approbation of the saints, than for the loss of the Divine approbation. O! know and consider these three things: *First*, Know that all your iniquities shall be read in the hearing of angels and men: the very thoughts which ye have had at midnight shall be known. What will be your thoughts then, O atheists! in that day? *Secondly*, Know that hypocrisy may win easily through the world under the name of grace, but in that day there shall be a clear distinction made. It is hard to rid marches betwixt hypocrisy and grace; but God shall take your vizard off your face, and let you be known, and ye shall get the name which ye deserve, O hypocrites. *Thirdly*, Know that

woe shall be to such who shall not be found in Christ at that day. O! will ye ask him, and that with your hearts? " I take all the angels in heaven, and all the saints about the throne of God, to witness; yea, I take the very stones of these walls, and the timber of this house, and this book in mine hand, to witness against you, that ye were invited to give your hearts to Christ."

The *last* consideration is, he that will not give his heart to Christ, believe it, these four things are coming upon him: *First*, He shall be no more intreated to keep his heart, neither shall he be intreated to give his heart to Christ any more, for the devil shall have it. *Secondly*, O atheists! these four thing shall overcome you: *First*, Sin, it shall have dominion over you; you once delighted mightily in sin, but, alas! it shall be a heavy burden to you in that day. *Secondly*, The wrath of God shall overcome you; O! that shall be a mighty prince. *Thirdly*, The devil. And, *lastly*, the lusts of your own hearts; all these shall tread you in the mire. *Fourthly*, There is this which is coming upon you, O atheists! there shall be a sentence of eternal excommunication pronounced against you, who would not give your hearts to Christ, these blessed and gracious lips that always did delight in speaking good to lost sinners, shall then pronounce that sad and woful sentence against you, ' Depart from me, ye cursed, I know you not.' The *last* thing which is approaching unto you is, the day is coming, when ye shall be sent away to that prison, out of which there is no redemption; ye shall be a number of miserable comforters one to another in that day. Ye shall not have a grain weight of comfort for all the joy and pleasure which many of you have had in a world; ' You shall be physicians of no value, and gnash your tongues for pain.' We would say this unto you, O! let the torments of hell, or let the joys of heaven, persuade you to give him your hearts; let the one constrain you, or let the other terrify you, to this noble duty of giving him your hearts; and if ye give him not your hearts, ye shall curse the day that ever ye were born, or that ever there was a prophet amongst you; and ye shall lament that ever ye heard tell of Christ, if ye make not use of him. Now, I would only read the text over again, ' Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.' But if ye do not keep it with all diligence, out of it shall be the issues of death, ye shall get eternal torments for your reward.

Now to him who can persuade you to give your hearts in keeping to him, and who can anoint your eyes with eye-salve, to see your lost estate, to his blessed name we desire to give praise.

SERMON II.

PROV. iv. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

THERE are two great books which a Christian ought mainly to study, there is God, and his own heart; and he would study to know the unspeakable goodness of the one, and the desperate wickedness of the other. And we may say, the first time that a Christian turns over the first page of his heart, and looks upon that desperate wickedness that is therein, he might be constrained to cry out, 'Woe is me, I am undone:' yea, there is as much wickedness in every one's heart who is here, as might be a quarrel to destroy a whole world, if God would contend with us in his just judgment. I think, Christians can never trust their hearts too little, and they can never trust God too much. And have we not received many proofs of both these? I may say as Jeremiah said, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? O! but a sight of the evil temper of our hearts, and a sight of the goodness of God, would make many of us renounce our self-righteousness, and our spiritual pride, and admire his transcendent righteousness. I think, a Christian ought to be as these four beasts, which are mentioned in Rev. iv. 6, 7, 8, where the four beasts that are spoken of there, may relate to the ministers of the gospel, and may also be taken for every real Christian: *First*, We should be full of eyes before, to wait on Christ, and to depend upon him, 'as an handmaid upon her mistress,' and not reflect upon these things that are behind, as to rest upon this, acccording to that word of the apostle, 'I press hard toward the mark, forgetting the things that are behind,' &c. *Secondly*, A Christian should look to those things that are behind, to guard against enemies, and to be much in searching his former ways, to see how much of them hath been given to God, and how much of them hath been given to the devil. *Thirdly*, Christians should be full of eyes within, to examine themselves, and to see their own corruptions. There are many who have eyes without, to take notice of other people's carriage; but they have no eyes to look within to themselves. O! would to God that there were fewer markers and observers of other people's carriage, and more of examiners and lookers to themselves, 'Purifying ourselves, even as he is pure.' *Fourthly*, We should be as a lion in our walk, to point out our boldness against the devil and his temptations. *Fifthly*, We should be like a calf, or an ox, to point out our laboriousness. *Sixthly*, We should be like the 'face of a man,' to point out our

undertanding and knowledge. *Lastly*, We should be like a flying eagle, to point out our heavenly-mindedness; and our conversation should be directed by the law of God; all our thoughts, and all our actions, and all our words, should be conformable to his mind; and as the eagle hath wings, so also ought we to have wings; even as they had six wings; we should have two of them to cover our face, to point out the reverence we ought to give to God; and we should have two wings to cover our hands, to show out the readiness to obey God's commandments; and we should have two wings to cover our feet, to point out our imperfections, and the crooked paths that we walk into. O Christians! will ye study these three following things, and ye will not have so high thoughts of yourselves, as oftentimes ye have? *First*, It is through the restraining grace of God that those grievous sins which ye committed come not up to perfection of adultery, sodomy, and incest. *Secondly*, There is no sin which ye commit, but there is some secret inclination to it, although ye think ye hate it much.

Thirdly, It is impossible for you to comprehend, take up, and remember those iniquities that ye have committed since ye were born, as David is convinced, Psalm li. 2. 'Cleanse me from my sin,' &c. Which we conceive to be not only from his known sins, but from his sins which he hath forgotten: and I would say this unto you, David 'who was a man according to God's own heart,' he knew not the number of his sins; and O! how much less can we, that never came the hundred part so far? And also, you may see it in the practice of Job, 'How many are mine iniquities and sins, make me to know my transgression and sin.'

Now we come to the words, and there are four things which we spoke to from them at the last occasion: *First*, The duty commanded, 'Keep thy heart.' *Secondly*, The qualification, how this duty of keeping the heart should be gone about, and it is, 'with all diligence.' *Thirdly*, That the heart of man hath many temptations seeking it, which is likewise presupposed in that word, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence.' *Lastly*, The reasons why we should keep it, 'for out of it are the issues of life.' Now for the first thing in the words, we spoke to two things from it: *first*, That it was a Christian's duty to keep his heart. *Secondly*, What was comprehended under this, for a Christian to keep his heart, and likewise of these disadvantages which a Christian hath from the not keeping of the heart. Now, for the first thing, viz. that it is a Christian's duty to keep his heart: we shall speak yet to some considerations to persuade you to this duty.

The *first* consideration is, take notice of the bad qualifications of the heart, and there are six or seven bad qualifications of it;

First, The heart is exceeding deceitful, Jer. xvii. 9. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?' And likewise Isaiah speaks of a deceived heart, which leads people aside, Isa. xliv. 20. The heart of man is a deceitful thing, it will preach 'peace, peace,' when there is none. O! it is deceitful, it will make us commit sin, when there is no outward pleasure therein. *Secondly*, That 'the heart is desperately wicked, who can know it?' that is, if there were threatenings, commands, promises and convictions of sin, yet your heart will cause you to sin; if hell were put in your way, yet, for the pleasure of an idol, ye would run to sin. *Thirdly*, That there is a cursed union betwixt the heart and idols, Hosea iv. 8. 'And they set their hearts on their iniquity.' Verse 17. 'Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone.' And that word is thrice repeated, Ezek. xxiv. 3, 4, 5. 'They have set up their idols in their hearts.' Keep your hearts with diligence, I say, lest that union be entertained. *Fourthly*, There are many of our hearts that are exceeding mad, Eccles. ix. 3. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead." Alas! there is nothing but madness in our hearts, according to that word, "The land is full of images, and they are mad upon their idols." Certainly the hardness of our hearts, speaks that we keep not our hearts. *Fifthly*, Our hearts are divided, as is in Hosea x. 2. 'The heart is divided,' &c. which speaks a great necessity of keeping our hearts. *Sixthly*, Our hearts are exceeding whorish, Ezek. ix. 6. 'Because I am broken with their whorish hearts, which have departed from me,' &c. *Lastly*, Our hearts are exceeding dull and ignorant in the ways of godliness, as in Eph. iv. 18. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." There is such an Egyptian hardness upon our hearts, that we cannot know sin; there is some of us, that, I fear, knows not good by evil.

The *second* consideration is, there is such a difficulty to keep our hearts, therefore we ought strongly to guard them. Adam had his heart but a short time in keeping, and yet he could not keep it; which shews the difficulty of keeping of it. Psalm xxv. 20. "O keep my soul, and deliver me, let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee." 1 Peter iv. 19. "Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." I would say to you, pray that prayer that Christ prayed, when he was upon the cross, 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.' O pray that prayer every day; for, I say, if God forsake us but

one hour, O what a great multitude of sins would we commit? Acts. v. 4. 'Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? 'Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.' Yea, even to God, who is the Judge of all. As if he had said, "It was conceived in "thine heart, and then it was brought forth."

The *third* consideration is, that the heart is the mother and original of all evil; and if this were believed, no doubt we would watch with much watchfulness and serious self-examination: likewise I would say, that the not keeping of our hearts, is the cause of many of our walking so profanely as we do. It is impossible for you to walk with God aright, if ye have not your hearts well keeped. If you would keep a good conversation, then keep your hearts; for ye must never at any time trust your hearts, for either one time or other they will turn enemies unto you.

The *last* consideration is, that it is a most excellent thing for a Christian to keep his heart; would ye win to that commendation that Solomon hath, Prov. xvi. 32. 'He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city?' O then, keep your hearts: as if he had said, "It is better to conquer that *modicum*, and "little thing, the heart, than it is for one to conquer a city."

Now the *second* thing that I would speak to for the keeping of the heart is, to these disadvantages, which is waiting upon the not keeping of it, Prov. xxv. 28. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." And I would give you these disadvantages, which will attend upon these that do not keep their hearts: *First*, A temptation will soon overcome that person with little difficulty; the devil will not need to use many arguments for the gaining of that person's heart. Alas! our hearts (many of them, by all appearance) are in the devil's hands, and he hath a surer grip of them, than we ourselves have. O that the devil should have so many of our hearts, and that so many of them should be at his command. O believe it, he is the hardest master, and he is the worst master that ever we served; and if he once get us within his grips, it will be hard getting out again. These hearts that are not kept, are all put through other with confusion, like a ruinous city, that wanteth government. Believe it, ye cannot do God a greater service than to keep your hearts well; and the devil would count it a greater courtesy done to him, if ye would resign them to him, therefore, see which of them ye will obey. *Fourthly*, If ye would consider and look what a thing the heart of man is, O ye would guard more than ye do: for it is always besieged with the lusts which the devil sets before your eyes. And there are three lusts which the devil doth besiege you

with, and be sure they shall overcome you, if ye keep not your hearts. *First*, 'The lust of the eye.' O, but that lust hath brought many to his obedience. *Secondly*, 'The lust of the flesh.' O! that hath overcome many. And, *thirdly*, 'The pride of life.' O! to think how these three enemies have taken many captives.

Now, the next thing which I shall insist a little upon is, to point out some marks and evidences, whether ye have kept your hearts or not.

First, If ye have kept your hearts aright, ye will endeavour to crucify vain thoughts. Are there not some here that never knew what it was to crucify and crush vain and idle thoughts? This was an evidence that David kept in his heart, Psalm cxix. 13. 'I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.' There is some that repents for outward breakings out of sin, but not for secret sins in their hearts, and be sure these never keep their hearts. Did ye never read that, Matth. v. 8. 'Blessed are the pure in heart?' Your sanctification shall never grow so long as ye lodge vain thoughts within your breast. 'O Jerusalem, how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee? saith the Lord.' Be careful to think upon such thoughts as ye may answer for one day unto the Lord, for your midnight thoughts shall be read in the hearing of angels and men. O! would you not be ashamed and lothe yourselves, if ye would consider these vile and vain thoughts that lodge within many of you?

Secondly, These hearts that are not kept, they embrace temptations so soon as they are assaulted by them, and they do not take notice that they are temptations; and that is a mark of one that keepeth not his heart, and that takes no notice of the devil till he hath shut his temptations within his breast: this is clear, that David kept not his heart, when the devil's temptations did so assault him, 2 Sam. xi. and got such a victory over him: and it is also clear in the practice of Peter, when he denied his Master thrice, it was a token that he kept not his heart well.

The *third* evidence of one that keepeth not his heart is, he will commit sin with much deliberation; many of us commit sin, after we have been thinking long upon it. Hence it is spoken, 'That there are some that study iniquity upon their beds, and when it is light they put it in practice,' Micah ii. 1. And likewise in Prov. vi. amongst these heinous sins that are odious and hateful to God, wicked imaginations are reckoned amongst the midst of them, verse 8. I say, ye who sin with much deliberation, ye have lost much of the fear of God; for to sin with deliberation or advisement, is more than to sin against light.

The *fourth* mark of these that do not keep their hearts is, they sin with much willingness and pleasure. Ephraim willingly

worshipped the calves of Dan and Bethel. Are there not some here, whose hearts are following their idols, and posting hard after them? But, O! can your idols do you any good, and purchase pleasure to you one day? And be sure of this, these who sin with much willingness and pleasure, that is a clear evidence that they keep not their hearts well.

The *fifth* evidence of a heart that is not kept is, when a Christian's heart can misregard opportunities: in which opportunities, communion with God may be attained; it is a token that the bride's heart was not kept, when she would not rise and open to Christ.

The *sixth* evidence is, when the heart takes not up the motions of God towards it; that is a token that that man's heart is not well kept, who cannot take up God's motions: but a Christian, whose heart is kept, he can take up the motions of the Spirit: this is clear, if you compare the second and third chapters of the Song together.

Lastly, Ye may know whether your hearts be kept or not, and that is, when ye do not discern the decays of the graces of the Spirit within you. There are four graces by which a Christian may know whether he keeps his heart or not. 1. If the grace of prayer decay. 2. Tenderness. 3 Faith. 4. Love. O therefore, I would desire you to try your graces, what condition they are in, lest ye go down to the grave with a mistake in your bosom. Now I shall shut up our discourse with speaking these four things:

First, A Christian ought to keep his heart constantly: the hypocrite hath a sort of keeping his heart, but he keeps it not constantly, as a real Christian. And there are five times when he especially keeps it. The *first* time is, when he is under afflictions and crosses, then he will not let his heart wander from the ways of God's commandments, and he will keep his heart mightily at that time. *Secondly*, He will keep his heart at that time, when convictions are sharp and strong upon him, Acts ii. 37. "When they were pricked in their hearts, they cried out, men and brethren, what shall we do?" Amongst which we may conceive, there are sundry hypocrites; the hypocrite thinks to win through the world under the notion of a real saint: but believe it, although ye would win through the world under this notion, (as many do) yet the day is coming, when ye and your practice shall be put to the touch-stone. The *third* time when the hypocrite will keep his heart is, when he is going to the sacrament of the communion; but when he is come from it, he will take no notice of his heart any more; and the only reason that he keeps his heart then is, that he may have peace with a natural

conscience. Yea, I fear, if we were all searched, it would be known, that the most end we pray for is, to satisfy a natural conscience, and not to please God. The *fourth* time when a hypocrite will keep his heart is, under sickness and diseases; yea, any gross one will keep his heart in sickness; they who never prayed, (almost) will pray at that time. The *last* time when he will keep his heart will be, when he is called to some public holy work, as if he were called to pray amongst Christians. O then, he will keep his heart diligently: and if he be in a minister's sight, he will keep the sabbath-day; but, alas! the man doth not remember that a greater one than a minister sees him, even God the Lord. A hypocrite will keep his outward man, but not his inward man: he will not swear, but in his heart he will curse God; he will keep his feet outwardly, but inwardly he will commit adultery in his heart: if you would be sincere, you must mortify your invisible idols, as well as your visible idols.

The *second* thing that I would say, is this, if ye keep your hearts, and not resign them freely to God, although ye were to live eighty years, and if you would pray the one forty, and weep the other forty of these years, (if such a thing could be possible) yet all that pains should be for nought, if ye do not freely first give him your heart; for you shall get that fearful sentence pronounced against you, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, I never knew you.' O therefore, while it is called to-day, give God your hearts, Psalm lxxviii. 56. "Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies. Psalm xxxiv. 16. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." If ye had the tongue of an angel to speak and pray, yet if ye give him not your hearts, all your prayers shall return back empty to you.

The *third* thing which I would say to you, is this, the heart of man is a thing which ye will find a great difficulty to keep; and this is a proof of it, that a Christian will even sometimes change in prayer. He will sometimes change four times. *First*, When he begins, he will be in a flame of love to God. And *secondly*, He will fall secure. And *thirdly*, He will have terrible thoughts of God. And *lastly*, Before he hath done, he will speak to God as to his companion: and I would pose all of you that are here, if ye have not been in all (or most part) of these frames when you have been praying. Now I would charge you (as ye will answer to Christ one day) that you would give him your hearts. There are two words which I would say to you; and O that ye would consider upon them, Christ comes and says to us first, 'Take up thy cross, and deny thyself, and follow me.' That is Christ's first word unto a believer, and O! but that be

a great mystery to flesh and blood. And the devil comes and says the second word, which is, 'Fall down and worship me, and I will give thee a kingdom.' The first word of the devil is ever the fairest word that ye shall get; and the first of Christ is the sharpest. Now which of these two offers to you do ye choose? I would only say these two words to you: *First*, Think ye not shame to refuse Christ so openly as ye do? *Secondly* That answer which ye gave him, is not the answer which he seeks. I say, one day ye shall be brought before his throne, waiting for your condemnation: if ye give not precious Christ your hearts, ye shall stand before his tribunal to receive your last and fearful doom: O man, and O woman, with what face wilt thou stand? And what wilt thou have to say when thou stands before him? I remember the word of a cursed emperor, who had made defection from Christ, he was forced to breathe out his last words thus sadly, 'Thou hast overcome me at last, O Galilean.' So he is too strong a party for thee to contend with, and at length he will overcome thee.

Now the *last* thing that I would say unto you is, if you do not give him your hearts, I (as the ambassador of Christ) declare to you, that Christ and you shall fight together. Put on your harness, put on your steel coat, (for Christ will be ready for you) and boast when you put it off again. And I would say this unto you, that it is impossible for you to take Christ, except ye get a sight of Christ and his beauty; and if ye saw him in his beauty, ye would say, I will take him though I get not a kingdom: O! the angels and glorified spirits of just men now made perfect, may wonder at us, why we stand out so long? Oh! will ye give to another your hearts and not to precious Christ, who hath given you his heart, and who is worthy of all your hearts? Can you look upon that noble Plant of Renown, and not give him your hearts, who had a hole made in his side, through which ye might see his heart? Oh man, and oh woman, why will ye not give Christ your hearts? What shall ye say, when Christ shall say first to you, 'Why would ye not sincerely give me one day in your lifetime.' *Secondly*, 'Why would you not give me your hearts?' I will tell you three things which will be very terrible for you, O atheists! in that day when you shall appear before God's tribunal. *First*, The hearing of the gospel. *Secondly*, Which is more terrible, the resurrection of Christ. *Lastly*, Which is terriblest of all, when that fearful sentence shall be pronounced against you, 'Depart, depart.' O then, you shall curse the day that ever you was born in Glasgow, or in Scotland. Now, O you inhabitants of this place, I charge you, (as ye shall answer one day to God) that ye would

give him your hearts in keeping, and in so doing ye shall have life eternal. O therefore, 'kiss the Son by the way, lest his anger break out, and ye perish for ever.' Now to him who can persuade your hearts to embrace him, we desire to give praise.

SERMON III.

PROV. iv. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

THERE is a great and vast difference betwixt the heart of a Christian while he is on earth here below, travelling in these tents of mortality, and the heart of a Christian when he shall be above, taking up his eternal possession in those blessed and everlasting tents of immortality. And O! it is a mystery for you to believe, that such a day is approaching, when those hearts of yours which have been so unstedfast in the way of godliness, that they shall once be 'made as pillars in the house of your God, and no more to go out.' We may compare the heart of a Christian (while he is here below) unto Reuben, it is 'unstable as water, which doth mar its excellency; for a Christian, (while he is here below) he is like the moon, changeable, and subject to many vicissitudes, but when he shall be above, he shall be as the sun, 'having the light of seven days;' and is not this a mystery for you to believe, that such a day is approaching, when these hearts of yours, that have wearied so much in the service of God, to whom prayer hath been a cross, to whom the worship of God in the public ordinances hath been a burden? I say, is it not a mystery for you to believe, that such a day is approaching, 'when ye shall serve God night and day without any wearying?' There is not such a voice heard in heaven as this, 'this is a hard saying, who can bear it?' If it were possible that ye could ask that question at Abel, if he desired to change his estate, or his wearying to do God service? (he, who of all the lost posterity of Adam, was the first inhabitant of heaven) he would disdain to return an answer to such a question, it being without all ground and reason. And is not this a mystery for you to believe, that such a day is approaching, when these hearts of yours, that are now under so much darkness, such misconstructions of God, such misconceptions of the holy Majesty of God, and of the great mysteries of the kingdom of heaven? I say, is it not a mystery for you to believe, that such a day is approaching, when your hearts shall be fully taught to comprehend these depths and profound secrets of the kingdom of God, when the most brutish and darkest understanding shall

be made to resolve that question and mystery, how three can be in one, and how one can be in three? They shall then be able to resolve that profound mystery of the two natures in the person of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ: and in that day your hearts shall be able to comprehend that blessed union that is amongst the Persons of the blessed Trinity; and likewise in that day, ye shall be able to take up that blessed knot of union, which is betwixt Christ and believers; and is not this a mystery for you to believe, that such a day is approaching, when your hearts, that have been under such exercise of sorrow, that they shall be clothed with the garment of joy and praise? And I must ask at you, O, what a robe must that be, to be clothed with the garment of praise? It is a more excellent and glorious robe, than all the robes of the great kings and emperors of the world. Did your eyes ever see such an excellent garment, as the garment of praise? There is a threefold clothing which a Christian shall put on, when first his heart shall enter into heaven, in that blessed day of the resurrection: *First*, He shall be clothed with the robe of the righteousness of Christ; and O! what must such a robe as this be? *Secondly*, He shall be clothed with the robe and garment of immortality; and O! what a robe and resplendent garment shall this be? And *thirdly*, In that day, when first a Christian shall enter into heaven, he shall be clothed with the garment of praise; and O! what excellent and glorious robes shall all these be? 'When ye shall be brought to the King in raiment of needle work, and shall be made all glorious within.

At the last occasion when we spake upon these words, we told you there were four things contained in them; and the *first* was a duty imposed upon Christians, that they should keep their hearts. The *second* thing was, that there were many spiritual enemies, who study to gain and conquer our hearts, which is presupposed in these words, 'Keep thy heart.' The *third* thing is, the qualifications which should be annexed to this precious and soul-concerning duty, holden forth in these words, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence;' or, as the words may be rendered, 'With all keeping, or, above all keeping.' The *last* thing which was contained in the words, was the spiritual advantages which attend the exercise of that duty, or the reasons enforcing the duty, 'for out of it are the issues of life;' that is the ground on which a Christian should walk in persuading himself to the doing of this duty. Now, as for the *first* thing, viz. the duty commanded, that we should keep our hearts, we have spoken several things from it: now there are only five things which we would speak to.

First, A Christian should study to keep his heart from the predominant lusts which dwell in it; it is of the concernment of

a Christian to keep himself from all iniquities, but it is the special concernment of a Christian to keep his heart from his predominant sins; this was the practice of David, Psalm xviii. 23. 'I have kept myself from mine iniquity.' Which we conceive to be understood of his predominant lusts. There is not an idol or lust which a Christian hath in his heart, but he ought to offer it up to God, and to put a knife to the throat of his most pleasant Isaac. I will tell you of five great idols which a Christian hath no will to quit, and it is impossible for him to keep his heart till he quit them. *First*, A Christian hath no will to quit his religious idols; that is, those idols, the loving of which is a commanded duty, but the immoderate love of which is an idol. As, for instance, it is a great difficulty for a tender Abraham to put a knife to the throat of his only son Isaac; or for parents to be denied to their children, and for an husband to be denied to his wife, the loving of which is their duty, but the immoderate love of them is sin. *Secondly*, A Christian hath ill will to quit his advantageous idol, that idol, in pursuit of which he conceives there is outward advantage to be waiting upon it; as, for instance, it is a great difficulty to persuade a covetous man to be denied to his riches; O! but that divinity which is in Prov. xxiii. 4. it is the divinity which the most part (or at least many) of the Christians now-a-day do not study to close with or obey, 'Labour not to be rich,' &c. There is a greater easiness and facility for one to quit his pleasant idols, than to quit his advantageous idols: as, for example, a covetous person will sooner forsake his idols, than his riches. *Thirdly*, A Christian hath ill will to quit his invisible idols, these idols that do lodge within his heart; there is a greater easiness for a Christian to quit his visible idols, than to quit his invisible idols. Sometimes a person will forsake his drunkenness and cursing, who will not forsake his pride and lust. But it is of your concernment, to be as much taken up in the mortification of invisible idols, as in the mortification of visible idols. *Fourthly*, A Christian hath much difficulty to quit these idols, which he hath a natural inclination unto; besides the love which we have contracted to some predominant idols, by the reason of the constitution of man's body. There are some that have a natural inclination unto one idol, more than to another. And to clear this, I would say this unto you, I presuppose some under these three predominant lusts. 1. That there are some under the predominant idol of love to the world. 2. That there are some under the predominant idol of pride. 3. That there are some under the predominant idol of lust; that is, of the idol that you have most natural inclination unto; assuredly you have greatest unwillingness to mortify that idol. *Fifthly*, A Christian

hath much difficulty to mortify that idol, the forsaking of which hath great outward disadvantages waiting upon the forsaking thereof; as that young man in the gospel, he could not endure that doctrine, 'Go and sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor, &c. That was an idol which had much disadvantage (as he conceived) attending upon the forsaking of it, so that he could not embrace such a doctrine; but it is said, 'he went away sorrowful,' &c. Cursed be that person which goeth away sorrowful when Christ and an idol is put in the balance together, and whose heart consents rather to take the idol than Christ: I would only say this by the way to you, are there not many here, that if they would tell that which is their practice, they might condemn themselves for this, that absence and distance with Christ was never so great a burden to their spirits, as the want of the actual enjoyment and fruition of an idol? And doth not this speak, that ye prefer your idols before Christ? 'Not this man, but Barabbas,' is the cursed divinity of many of your hearts.

The *second* thing which I would speak to you, is this, a Christian should not delay to give obedience to this precious and soul-concerning command of keeping his heart. I know that there are some that do not simply deny the obedience to this command, but they postpone the giving obedience unto it until another time. I would only say this to such, 'boast not of to-morrow, for ye know not what a day will bring forth: if ye keep not your hearts to-day, it will be a great difficulty for you to keep them to-morrow; therefore follow the practice of David, 'I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments, Psalm cxix. 60. Amongst which we conceive, he made haste to keep this commandment of keeping his heart.

Thirdly, We would say this unto you of the duty of keeping your hearts, if ye would keep your hearts aright, ye must entertain these four noble and excellent guests within your hearts, otherwise there will be great difficulty for you; yea, an impossibility for you to keep them. The *first* guest that must be dwelling in your hearts is, 'Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, he must dwell in your hearts by faith. *Secondly*, The word of God must dwell in our hearts by love; and if once he hide his word in your hearts, then ye would be helped to keep your hearts, and that with much advantage and gain. *Thirdly*, If ye would keep your hearts, the love of God must dwell in them; and if these were indeed your attainments, then we might pronounce that sentence upon you, 'The peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep (as in a garrison) your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ.' *Fourthly*, Ye should keep the fear and dread of God within your hearts. Study to live under the divine appre-

hension of the omnipotent majesty of God. We conceive, the little taking up of the omniscience of God, of the omnipotency of God, and of the terrors of God, is both a great and special influence upon your neglect of the duties of keeping your hearts.

Fourthly, There is this which we would speak to from this duty of keeping the heart, and it is this, we would propose several things that ye would endeavour by all means to keep your hearts from them. *First*, A Christian should study to keep his heart from the deceit thereof, and from these strong delusions that it speaks. This is the great mystery of iniquity, that even our hearts will deceive our own hearts, and study to bring them to ruin: Take heed ye deceive not yourselves, &c. saith Jeremiah; or, as the words may be rendered, "Take heed ye deceive not your souls, 1 Cor. iii. 18. Let no man deceive himself, &c. And Gal. vi. 7. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for what a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It is certain, that there are many soul-destroyers, and self-deceivers among us, their hearts seek peace to them, when there is no peace to them from God; and in speaking to this, that a Christian should keep his heart from the deceivings of his own heart, I shall speak a little to two things. 1. What are these deceits that lodge in the heart of man?

And there is this *first* deceit of the heart of man, the most sinful thing that can be, we can put a favourable title and name upon it; and there are few sins which any are lying under, but they can put a favourable title upon them; do not many call their presumption faith? Are there not many that call security, peace? Are there not many that call passion, zeal? Are there not many that call their lurk-warmness and indifferency in the things of godliness, their spiritual wisdom? And are there not many that call their misbelief, humility? Are there not many who call their vain prodigality, mortification to the things of a world? And likewise, are there not many which call their worldly mindedness, frugality? This was the deceit of Jehu, that called his proud loving of a kingdom, zeal; 'Come see (saith he) 'and behold my zeal for the Lord;' whereas, if he had spoken the language of his own heart, he might have said, "Behold my zeal for myself."

Secondly, There is this deceit of the heart of man, that the most excellent and choice things of God, our heart can put an unpleasant name and construction upon them: as, for instance, are there not many that call tenderness, hypocrisy? Are there not many that call humility of spirit, stupidity? And are there not many who call zeal for God, rashness? This was the cause that caused Ahaz to fall, he called believing in God, tempting

of God, 'I will not tempt God,' saith he. While in the mean time he was pressed to faith in God. It is a cursed practice in the hearts of many, they put a false robe upon godliness, and study then to flee from it; just like the practice of the Jews, they put a 'scarlet robe upon Christ, and then mocked him.'

There is this *third* deceit of the heart of many, that it doth present impediments and diversions to hinder us from the exercise of duty. I would pose you, O Christians! when went you to duty, but there was something that your hearts proposed a diversion from the exercise of that duty. This is clear, Prov. xxvi. 13. "The slothful man saith, there is a lion in the way, a lioness in the streets:" he presents to himself an imaginary impediment to divert him from his duties. Which words point out the folly of the excuse, seeing there uses not to be lions in the streets, nor in the high ways, they frequenting more in the solitary and desert places. This is also clear in Song v. 3. where the carnal and secure heart of the spouse, when she is called to open to Christ, she presents this impediment, 'I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?' I shall only, in speaking of these impediments, which our cursed hearts do propose to divert us from duty, instance them in the exercise of prayer, that our hearts do propose several impediments to divert us from that precious and soul-concerning duty of prayer; and I shall name five impediments, which our cursed and carnal hearts do present to hinder us from that duty, after God hath presented to us a golden opportunity for doing of the duty.

First, Our carnal heart doth propose this impediment, O say ye, I am not in a praying frame, and so I must desist from this duty of prayer at this time. I would say to such that desist from prayer, because they are not in a praying frame, these two words: 1. Do ye suppose the way to attain to a praying frame, is to desist from prayer? Should ye not go to prayer, that ye may be helped to win a praying frame? 2. Do ye never go to prayer, but when ye are in a praying frame? I suppose ye pray not once in a week then, and it is much if ye pray once in a month, if ye pray not but when ye are in a praying frame.

The *second* impediment is, our hearts will tell us, it will be more advantage not to pray, than to pray. Sometimes a Christian will be under that conviction, that he doth offend God more in prayer, than in desisting from prayer: and upon that account we do fold our hands, and neglect this duty. 1. I would say this to such, it is indeed a sad and afflicting thing, the offending of God so much in prayer, but it is far sadder to give over prayer. 2. I would say this to such, I can hardly believe that ever ye can

offend God so much in prayer, as by the total neglect of the duty.

There is this *third* impediment, which our hearts do propose to divert us from duties, and especially from the exercise of the duty of prayer, we argue thus with ourselves, we are not under the sensible necessity of what we need, and so we say, we will not go to God at this time; for if we pray under such a case, we will but turn complimenters with God, we will but 'flatter him with our mouth, and lie to him with our tongue.' I would say this to such, the best way to bring up our hearts to the sensible convictions of your necessity is, to be much in the exercise of prayer. A Christian must pray for sorrow for sin, if he wants it; a Christian must pray for sense of necessity, if he wants it; and a Christian must pray for tenderness, when he wants it. Prayer is the universal messenger, which we must constantly send to God for supply of all our necessities: there is not a case which a Christian can be in, but prayer may go to God as a messenger for a remedy to such a case, when he stands in need.

The *fourth* impediment, which our carnal hearts propose to divert us from prayer is, our hearts are not under a right majestic apprehension of God, and so ye say, if we go to prayer at this time, we will be guilty of the third command, 'in taking his holy name in vain.' If we go to prayer at this time, saith our deceiving hearts, we will but put ourselves into that sin, 'to speak to God as our companion.' I confess, it is a sad thing to go to God without some divine impression of his Sovereignty and Majesty. And I would say this to you, I think it is one of the most sad and undeniable evidences of the little grace of God, which is in the hearts of many, that constantly in their prayers, they speak to God as to their companion. But I would ask this question at you, when went ye to prayer, but ye might find your hearts shortcoming in the due apprehension of the Majesty of God.

The *last* impediment, which our carnal hearts doth propose, to divert us from the exercise of prayer, is this, we say (many of us) that it is an inconvenient time for the exercise of that duty, therefore our hearts say, that we should delay the time of praying, till a more convenient season, according to that practice in Hag. i. 2. 'The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.' It is the cursed practice of our hearts, that when God presents an occasion to pray, we delay praying at that time, under the expectation of a more convenient season for going about that duty; just like that word which Felix spoke to Paul, we speak that to our occasion, O occasion, that is presented to me to pray in, 'Go away at this time, and at a more convenient season I will call for thee again.' I would say this to these which do so much slight the opportunities presented to them

to pray, I would only say these three words unto you who do so: *First*, What know ye, even ye which slight the call of God to go about prayer, what know ye, I say, but that may be the last call from heaven that ever ye shall get to pray? I would have Christians, and all of you that are here, meditating upon this, that when occasion is presented to you, ye might argue thus with yourselves, I must embrace this occasion, for I know not but this may be my last occasion. *Secondly*, I would say this to you, which slight your occasion to pray, when the next occasion is presented to you, ye will be more unfit for the exercise of prayer, and when the convenient time that ye did propose to yourselves is come, ye will then defer it to another time. *Thirdly*, I would say this unto you, who slight these golden opportunities that are presented to you to pray in, know this for a certainty, the slighting of occasions is a disobedience to the commandment of God. Would you know what are the occasions to pray? They are even God's call inviting you to go about that duty; and if you slight that occasion, the call of God is slighted by you.

There is this *fourth* deceit of the heart of man, which we would press you to study to eschew, and it is this, the heart of man studies by all means to extenuate sin, and to make it seem little, when it is not so; this is one of the great deceits of the heart, according to that of Solomon, 'So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour;' and he will add that as an excuse, 'Was not I in sport?' I will tell thee three great faults which are incident to Christians. *First*, There are some that look upon their perfections through a multiplying glass, their perfections appear to be more than they are. The church of Laodicea was guilty of this fault, supposing herself to have attained to much perfection, and to great length in duties, when indeed she had attained to nothing. *Secondly*, There are some who look upon their sins through an extenuating glass; they are like the unjust steward, when they owe an hundred talents, they go and write down fifty. *Thirdly*, Their iniquities, which they are convinced of, and are forced to charge upon themselves, they study to extenuate them, and say, Is it not a little one? And so they desire it to be spared.

The *last* deceit of the heart is, the heart doth oftentimes preach peace, when there is no peace from God. I am persuaded of this, let all the persons that are within these doors be asked of that question, 'Whether or not they have faith in God, or peace with God?' I suppose there are not many, but their hearts would say, 'They have peace with God.' O! that is a damnable deceit of the heart, that oftentimes it preaches peace to a man or woman

where there is no peace to them from God. I shall only, to make this deceit appear more lively in its native colours, say this of it. *First,* That it is a most mysterious and strong deceit of the heart, that will so speak peace to a man. Sometimes the word will speak war to a man, and yet his heart will speak peace to him: and O! is not that a mysterious deceit, that I suppose, if an angel from heaven would preach that doctrine to you, 'That there is no peace betwixt God and you;' many of your hearts would (for all that) preach and speak peace to yourselves? And *secondly,* This makes it a most mysterious deceit that sometimes your consciences do declare and preach to you, 'That you are not at peace with God;' yet over the belly of that assertion, your hearts will preach *peace to you. Thirdly,* This makes it a most mysterious deceit, that notwithstanding your lives and conversations, that they testify to yourselves and others, 'That you are at enmity with God,' yet your hearts will preach *peace to you.*

Now the *second* thing that we would say to you from this is, viz. that a Christian should keep his heart from the deceivings of his own heart, and it is this, ye should mainly guard against discouragements; this our blessed Lord Jesus pressed, John xiv. 1. 'Let not your hearts be troubled, &c. And it is clear, this is dehorted, Philip. iv. 6. 'Be careful for nothing,' &c. And in Psalm xlii. 5. David doth, as it were, expostulate with his own soul for being discouraged and cast down. Now, in speaking to this, that a Christian should guard against discouragements, I shall speak unto two things; and the *first* shall be to the rise of discouragements, and from whence it doth spring. And, secondly, I shall speak to some considerations to press this upon you, that ye would keep yourselves from discouragements.

And, *first,* We conceive, that discouragement it arises from this, when a Christian hath no visible victory over his idols, then his discouragement comes apace upon him: a Christian, after long wrestling with his idols, lusts, and corruptions, and hath little victory over them, he is prone and ready to draw that sad conclusion, 'there is no hope,' but that once he shall fall by the hand of some of his idols.

The *second* rise of discouragement is, from Christ's withdrawing of the sensible manifestations of his love and of his patience, Psalm xxx. 7. 'Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.' And it is clear in the practice of the disciples, the withdrawing of Christ's bodily presence, 'it made sorrow to fill their hearts.' I confess, there are not many which are sick of the disease of discouragement under absence from Christ; but however, it hath been the reason of his disciples discouragement, when Christ for many days absented himself from them.

Thirdly, This is the rise and discouragement when a Christian hath no returns of his prayers, Lam. iii. 8. compared with verse 18. where, in verse 8. he cries out, 'When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.' And verse 18. he draweth that sad conclusion, 'My hope and my strength is perished from the Lord.' The not getting returns of prayer hath been an occasion of much disputing the good will of God, and a foundation of much discouragement to his own people.

Fourthly, This is the rise of discouragement, when a Christian doth interpret the sad and afflicting dispensations of God, and he conceives that there is nothing but wrath speaking to him therein, then he falleth into a great fit of discouragement, as in Lam. iii. 17. compared with verse 18. where the rise of his discouragement was the misinterpreting of the sad dispensations of God.

Fifthly, This is the rise of a Christians discouragement, when he is made to possess the iniquities of his youth, and all the terrors of God seem to be called, as in a solemn assembly, round about him, O then, he taketh on a great fit of discouragement.

Now that which, *secondly*, we shall speak to is, to propose some considerations unto you to guard against discouragements.

The *first* shall be this, those that have a heart that is under the spirit of bondage and discouragement, they cannot pray as they ought; discouragement makes prayer a most unpleasant duty; as is clear, Psalm lxxvii. 4. 'I am so troubled, that I cannot speak.' Discouragement, as it were, hinders and obstructs the exercise of prayer. *Secondly*, Discouragement doth exceedingly interrupt the exercise of faith, as in Psalm xlii. 5. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou discouraged within me? trust in God, for I will yet praise him for the health of his countenance. The Psalmist, as it were, speaks a difference (if not an opposition) betwixt the disquieting and faith. If ye would not interrupt the lively acting of faith, ye would study to guard against discouragement, that ye do not sit down and draw desperate conclusions against yourselves. I know ye may call a Christian Marah now, because he is indeed under bitterness; but the day is approaching when ye may call a Christian Naomi, when he shall be comforted with the consolations of God.

The *third* consideration to press you to guard against discouragement is, there is no duty that a Christian is called to, when he is under discouragement, but it makes it a burden to him; according to that word, Jer. xx. 9. Discouragement brought forth that resolution, 'Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name,' &c. A soul that is under

the exercise of faith, moves swiftly, as the chariots of Aminadab; but a soul that is under the exercise of discouragement, moves as the chariots of Pharoah, heavily.

Lastly, There is this consideration to press you to guard against discouragement, and it is this, misbelief and discouragement, is the mother of apostacy; as is clear, Lam. i. 8. 'She sighed;' and what followed upon that? 'and turneth backward.' And it is no wonder discouragement grow big with child of apostacy, because it makes duties become tasteless.

Now the rest of the things which we would have a Christian keeping his heart from, we shall only but name them briefly unto you. The *third* frame that a Christian should keep his heart from is, from an impatient frame; he should study to make his heart keep silence to any cross that comes to him from the hand of God. *Fourthly*, He should keep his heart from a lusting frame, not to be taken up in an immoderate pursuit after the things of the world. *Fifthly*, He should keep his heart from an untender frame; he should study always to keep his heart tender, that he may have that divine softness, that his heart may melt: likewise he is to keep his heart from an unpraying frame, to be at every occasion in a fit temper of spirit for the duty of prayer. *Lastly*, He is to keep his heart from a secure frame, always to be upon the watch tower, and wait for the motions of Christ. And there are three things, the motions of which a Christian should take up. *First*, He should take up the motions of Christ, to hear if he can take up the motions of the sound of Christ's feet coming over the mountains of Bether. *Secondly*, He should take up the motions of his conscience, that he may not be sleeping when sin awakes. *Thirdly*, He should take up the motions of his heart, to see what frame it is in: a Christian should be able to write a diary of his own heart, that in such an hour of such a day, I was in a believing frame; and in such an hour of such a day, I was in a discouraged frame; and in such an hour of such a day, 'I sought him whom my soul loveth,' and in such an hour of such a day, 'he brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love.' The sum of all is, if ye would keep your hearts, ye must give them to Christ to keep, for that is the best way to keep them well; it is only to Christ ye must commit the keeping of them. Ye know, man had but his heart a short time in keeping, and he lost it. And I shall, before I close, because it is the great design of the preaching of the gospel, give you five considerations, that may provoke you to give your hearts to Christ.

The first consideration is, will ye consider the matchless and transcendent excellency which is in precious Christ? O! doth

not that transcendent beauty preach, 'My son, give me thy heart?' Psalm xxiv. 7. the Psalmist presseth opening to Christ upon this account, 'Lift up your hearts, O ye everlasting doors and gates.' And what is the argument wherewith he presseth it? 'And the King of glory shall come in.' I would only ask this at you, (O! ye hard-hearted) is it not marvellous presumption for you to refuse the precious offers of such a glorious King?

The *second* consideration to press you to give your hearts in keeping to Christ is, take a view and a comprehensive look of the precious acts of the infinite condescensions of Christ: doth not his coming down from heaven preach that doctrine, 'My son, give me thy heart?' Doth not his being born under the law, preach that doctrine, 'My son, give me thy heart?' And doth not his being born in so low a condition, preach that doctrine, 'My son, give me thy heart?' And if nothing will persuade you to give your hearts to Christ, ye would take a look of these five wounds which he received in his blessed body: *First*, Doth not the wound that he received in his right hand, preach this, 'My son, give me thy heart? *Secondly*, Doth not the wound that he got in his left hand, preach this doctrine, 'My son, give me thy heart?' *Thirdly*, Doth not the wound that he received in his precious side, preach this soul-concerning doctrine, 'My son, give me thy heart?' And likewise, doth not the wounds which he received in his blessed legs, preach this doctrine, 'My son, give me thy heart?' O! were ye never constrained to wish for ten thousand hearts, to ware and bestow upon him?' Oh! what hearts have ye, which refuse the offers of so noble and condescending a Prince?

The *third* consideration is, if ye will look upon these things which intreat you to give Christ your hearts, ye cannot but give them unto him. Christ cries, O! come and give me your hearts: necessity cries, O! go, and give Christ your hearts: and we say likewise, O! give Christ your hearts to keep.

The *fourth* consideration is, will ye look upon these unspeakable disadvantages which attend those that will not give their hearts to Christ. I would say this by the way, there are two balances upon which we weigh our hearts. *First*, Some weigh their hearts in the balance of the sanctuary, and they are found light. *Secondly*, Some weigh their hearts in the balance of deceit, and they are found without fault. But now, I say this to the persons which will not give their hearts to Christ, I defy all the angels in heaven to speak forth their unspeakable disadvantages, yea, sense shall be the best preacher of it in that day. And I shall name these three inexpressible disadvantages to you. *First*, if ye give not Christ your hearts, Christ shall be your eternal enemy.

And, on the contrary to that precious doctrine which he once preached, 'Come unto me,' he shall pronounce that sad sentence against you, 'Depart from me;' and therefore, as ye would not engage Christ to be your eternal enemy, ye should give him your hearts. O! the gospel-vengeance of a crucified Saviour will be more terrible, sad and fearful, than the vengeance of the law; Christ is the best friend, and the most terrible foe. The *second* disadvantage is, ye shall be eternally shut out from the enjoyment of the blessed company of angels, and from the souls of just men made perfect; and O! therefore, meditate and consider upon this, what it is to be separated from the Father, the first Person of the blessed Trinity; and from the Son, the second Person of the blessed Trinity; and from the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the blessed Trinity; and from all the blessed society which are in heaven. And the *last* disadvantage is, ye shall be kept under these everlasting chains, even all of you which will not give your hearts to Christ. If ye be not under this everlasting chain of love, ye shall be under these everlasting chains of wrath. I suppose the most stout-hearted sinner here, if he could but a moment hear the screekings of the damned, (if it were granted to him) he would not delay to give his heart to Christ.

The *last* consideration is, O consider these infinite, eternal, and unchangeable advantages that those have which give their hearts to Christ: we conceive, if all the angels in heaven would preach together upon the unspeakable blessedness of the saints in heaven, they would always close their sentences with this, "It "is unspeakable joy which attends those that are admitted to that "blessed life." There are five things which are unchangeable to Christians, and five things which are unchangeable to reprobates; there is this which is unchangeable to the saints: *First*, Their communion with God shall be unchangeable; for after they shall win to heaven, they shall be under a continual and blessed emanation of Christ's presence. *Secondly*, They shall have an unchangeable love. A Christian's love, while he is here, is like unto the moon, subject to many vicissitudes and alterations, but afterwards, when they shall be in heaven, their love shall be unchangeable. *Thirdly*, His holiness shall then be unchangeable, when once he shall put on the robe of Christ's righteousness, he shall then sing that song, 'O death! where is thy sting? And O grave! where is thy victory? *Fourthly*, His praise to God shall then be unchangeable; O! what a pleasant sight shall it be, to see the souls of just men made perfect, with harps in their hands, singing these pleasant songs unto God most sweetly, 'Hallelujah to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, which lives for ever?' Their tongue is made like the pen of a ready writer:

there is not such a complaint uttered by Moses in heaven, 'I am a man of slow speech:' neither doth Jeremiah now complain, 'I am a child, and cannot speak.' *Fifthly*, Their desires after God shall then be unchangeable: a Christian, while he is here below, he will desire God now, and within a little while, he will desire his idols: but then, when he shall be above, his desires after God shall be unchangeable.

And, upon the contrary, there are five things unchangeable in the lot of a reprobate, and of those that will not give Christ their hearts. *First*, their separation from God shall be unchangeable: when once they shall go down into the pit, there shall be no hope of coming up again. Oh! would ye think upon this, what a life it shall be, to be under eternal excommunication from Christ's presence? O! but if ye knew Christ, and believed what an one he were, ye would close with him. *Secondly*, The reprobate shall have an unchangeable sorrow. O! he may be sad, when the vengeance of God shall be squeezing the marrow out of his bones, and when he is eternally shut up in these horrible flames, and out of them to have no redemption. *Thirdly*, Reprobates, they shall have an unchangeable hatred against God, and God shall have an unchangeable hatred against them; and I cannot wish a greater misery to any, than for Christ to have an unchangeable hatred against them. *Fourthly*, Ye that are aliens from God, ye shall sin unchangeably, ye shall never cease to sin, and ye shall never cease to be tormented: on these two eternity shall be spent. *Lastly*, Your inward anxiety, and torturing of conscience, shall be unchangeable; that worm shall never die, but shall eternally gnaw your conscience.

Now what shall we say more? We have set life and death before you, and whether of them will ye embrace? O that ye would embrace Christ, even precious Christ, and give over your hearts to that blessed Lord. It is like, in these days, that the devil hath purchased many harpers to himself, to sing that song, 'I am not far from victory.' The curse of a crucified Saviour shall eternally come down upon the heads of these that will not give their hearts to Christ; and to you that will give, or have given your hearts to Christ, the eternal blessing of Christ shall come upon your hearts. Behold the day is coming, (O atheists!) when you would give ten thousand worlds for one invitation of the gospel again; and we would be content to bide ten thousand years in hell for one preaching, and it shall be denied to you. O therefore, do not withstand Christ's offers: take him, ye will get him for a look; and know, that if ye will not love him now, his heart shall burn with hatred against you; and one day he shall curse your cursed hearts, for that hatred ye bare to him. Now to him who intreats you to embrace his offer, be praise.

TWO
SERMONS,

CONTAINING ARGUMENTS AND DIRECTIONS

For hearing the Voice of GOD's Threatening Rod.

SERMON I.

Micah vi. 9. *The Lord's voice crying unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

It is a question that is hard to determine, whether the greatness of God, or the condescendency of God, be the greatest mystery? But O! when both these are put together, they make up a matchless mystery. What is more dreadful than power which cannot be resisted? And what is more terrible than wisdom from whom nothing can be hid? And yet what is more sweet, than the love wherewith he hath loved us, and the unchangeableness thereof, which doth cut off all suspicion? I would only say this unto you, God hath been speaking to you divers ways, and by different things; and, as the apostle speaketh, 'There are many voices in the world, and every voice hath its own signification.' So I may say, there is not a voice by which God speaketh to you, that needs to be a 'barbarian speaking in an unknown tongue.'

I confess it is sad, that when God condescends to speak unto us so many different ways, that there should be so many which should stop their ears: are there not some to whom Christ hath *piped*, and they have not *danced*? And now he is beginning to *mourn* to you, and O! will ye not *lament*? I would say this unto you, the day may be approaching, when Glasgow's rods shall be preachers, and its crosses teachers from the Lord. Yea, God is beginning to preach that word to you, that is in Jer. ii. 31. 'O generation, see the word of the Lord, &c.' If ye will not hearken to God, in the voice and mouth of his preachers, he will send a more severe preacher unto you, and ye shall be forced to hear his voice. I say, look that the contempt of Christ in his rods, in his ordinances, and in his offers, make not this place an Aceldama, a field of blood, and a Golgotha, the place of dead men's skulls. I say to you, the day may be approaching, when ye shall meet with these six silent things from God. *First*, When

ye shall meet with silent rods, when he shall not know nor understand the language of them, when they shall speak to you in a strange and profound language, which ye shall not understand. *Secondly*, When ye shall meet with a silent God, when ye shall cry to him, and he shall not hear you. *Thirdly*, When ye shall meet with silent and dumb ordinances, which shall not speak unto you. *Fourthly*, When ye shall meet with silent mercies, that all the good things he doth unto you, ye shall not know the language of them. *Fifthly*, When ye shall meet with the sad lot of a silent conscience, when ye shall not be reproved by it when ye sin, but God shall give you leave to fall and depart, and not to return. And, *lastly*, When ye shall meet with silent commands, with silent threatenings, and with silent promises; that is, ye shall never know what the promises call for, what the threatenings call for, nor what the commands call for, when he shall chastise you in the dark, and there shall be none to deliver you, and when there shall be none to plead your cause, but a sin-revenging God entering the list with you: when he shall say to them that are left, 'Do not pray for this people, nor intercede for them, for they are the people upon whom I will have no mercy.' I may say, by all appearance, our judgment will speak this, he hath spoken unto us in the still voice of the gospel, and he hath spoken unto us in the whirlwind, and yet he is in none of them: but what know ye, but God may the next time speak to you closing himself in a circle of fire: I have some times spoken that word to you, 'Awake, awake, O sleepers, and call upon your God.'

But to come to the words, in this chapter the prophet hath been leading a sad process against this people, for the neglect of duties which were lying at the door; and now we have in this verse the conclusion of it, and the scope whereof is this, shewing the people that the Lord would send a more sharp message, if they will not obey. And in it there are four things considerable.

First, We have an excellent exhortation given to hear the rod, and by it is not only meaned, to take up what the rod speaks, but also, 'Who hath appointed it.'

Secondly, There is that excellent consideration to press them unto it, 'It is the Lord's voice:' we may say that of the rod, which was said of Herod in another sense, 'It is the voice of God, and not of man.'

Thirdly, We have the people to whom the exhortation is given, and it is, 'unto the city;' that is, to Samaria, and to the bordering towns thereabout. Now the reason why the Lord's voice crieth unto the city, rather than to the country, the reason of it is either this, the city ordinarily hath most eminent

tokens of the mercies and respects of God, which being abused, makes God especially to contend with them; or else because of this, ordinarily most profanity is broached within the city, and doth vent itself thence into the country; according to that word which is spoken of Jerusalem, 'That from it profanity goeth out into the country, or whole land.'

The *fourth* thing in the words is, the person that will hear the voice of the rod, 'the Lord's voice,' and it is, 'the man of wisdom shall see thy name;' or, as the word may be rendered, 'the man of substance,' or 'of substantial wisdom.' Which speaks, that it is one of the greatest follies that is imaginable, not to hear the voice of the Lord, and his threatening rod.

The *last* thing in the words is, the way how the man of wisdom wins to the right use-making and understanding of the voice of the rod, and it is, 'by seeing his name.' Now, by the name of God, may be either understood, the seeing of the authority of God in his threatenings; or by the name of God, may be understood, his wisdom, his peace, his power, his justice, his sovereignty, and his holiness, the man of wisdom shall see these five excellent attributes of God shining in the rod, and in every sad dispensation which he meets with; and the reason of using that expression, 'He shall see,' is to point out these certain and distinct discoveries which the man of wisdom shall have by such a cross.

Now having thus made plain the words unto you, there are three things which we shall speak a little unto from the scope, before we come to the first thing in the words.

The *First* thing which we shall take notice of from the scope, is this, that the slighting of known duties, is the forerunner of some sad and lamentable stroke from the Lord, upon a person or people; these things which they know to be duties, and yet they slight and disobey them. I say, it is the forerunner of some sad and eminent act of the displeasure of God to a person or people: this is clear, Luke xii. 37, "That servant which knoweth his Lord's will, and prepareth not himself, neither doth according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." And that word in Jer. v. 5. "I will get me unto the great men, and I will speak unto them, for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgments of their God, &c." Yet it is said of these, "they have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds." And what follows? ver. 6. "Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them." Rom. i. 21, 26. where they professed themselves to know, and yet they glorify him not as God.' This is given as a reason, that he gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do things not convenient.' It is probable, the impiety and profanity of people, is

come to a wonderful height, when they can sin against light and knowledge. Now, in speaking to this more fully, I shall speak to some aggravations of the sin of slighting known duties.

The *First* aggravation is, when a person slights duty, after the sinfulness of that sin hath been discovered unto him, and engraven on his conscience, O! that is a mighty aggravation of that of sin; this is clear, Hosea v. 2. "And the revolters are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all, Neh. ix. 29. And have testified against them, yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not to thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments." I confess, sinning against convictions of conscience, (especially when they are sharp) is a greater sin, than to sin against light; this is indeed to sin with a lifted up hand, and not to blush, nor be ashamed, nor yet to be afraid to commit iniquity. Know now therefore, there are many here that slight known duties, notwithstanding of light, and the convictions of conscience, which they have had for doing so. I would only say to that person, be afraid, and stand in awe, lest the day be approaching, when God shall cease to be a reprover unto you, and the reins shall be laid on your own neck, and you shall be 'as a wild ass snuffing up the wind.'

The *Second* aggravation of slighting known duties is, when a person slights known duties, after God hath been discovering discontent with another person for that sin; when we see the justice of God overtaking another person for slighting of a known duty, and yet the person which stands beside, is not afraid to persist in the same sin; this is clear, Jer. iii. 8. 'And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce: yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.' As if he had said, "Though Judah hath beheld "what I have done to Israel for her whorish carriage, yet not-"withstanding of this, she went and played the harlot also." I confess, this is a greater aggravation than the former, and it speaks that such a sinner (in a manner) hath given a defiance to the justice of God, and hath cried out, (in a manner) "I care not what God will do, I will take my pleasure."

The *third* aggravation of the sin of slighting known duties is, when persons slight down duties, after God hath begun to contend with them for so doing. This is a mighty aggravation of sin, as is clear in Isa. lvii. 17. "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." A froward sinner hath had the rod shaken over his head, and hath drunk something of the justice of God, for slighting such a duty: yet to

persist in it, O! that is a scarlet and mighty transgression, and yet are there not many here who are such?

The *fourth* aggravation of the sin of slighting known duties is, when a person slights known duties upon very small temptations; is not this certain, a word of a temptation, the half of a word, yea, the very nod of a temptation, will put us from the doing of known duties? Yea, sometimes we will be glad of a temptation to divert us from the exercise of duties; yea, sometimes it is known when temptations are not present to divert us from the exercise of known duties, we will go forth and seek a temptation. I confess, the devil needs not to be at much pains in these days, there are many which give the devil work and employment; yea, and if he seek not them, they will seek him.

The *Fifth* aggravation of the sin of slighting known duties is, when persons do not so much as set about the well doing of them, that is a great aggravation; this is clear, Luke xii. 47. 'He that knows his master's will, and doth it not, neither doth prepare himself to do it, is worthy of double stripes.' He will not take pains to prepare his heart for duties, that is a mighty aggravation. Some are content to be under their fetters, as though they were bound of God: some are content to live under their convictions, as though it were impossible for them to answer them, and they say, 'There is no hope.'

The *sixth* aggravation of the sin of slighting known duties is, when a person slights known duties, after God hath commended the beauty and excellency of such duties; that is, no doubt, a great aggravation: as when God doth commend prayer, and discovers the beauty thereof to a Christian, O then it is a sad and lamentable thing for that person to sit down and slight his duty; this is, as it were, to slight prayer, when it hath on all its ornaments.

The *seventh* aggravation of the sin of slighting known duties is, when persons slight duties, after they have been convinced of the advantage which waits upon the doing of them. Are there not some that slight prayer, notwithstanding they have been convinced that prayer hath been to them a mount Tabor, in which they have seen Christ transfigured? Some will slight prayer after they have been convinced that prayer hath been a tristing place betwixt Christ and them; and after they have been convinced that prayer hath been as the top of mount Pisgah, on which they have gotten a view of the promised land; O! that is a notable aggravation of the slighting of known duties, when the person hath this to say, Now I am slighting my own advantages.

There is this *last* aggravation, when a person slights known

duties, yet with very little resentment and grief of heart: are there not many persons that have slighted their morning prayers here to-day, and yet have not convictions thereof? and are there not many persons here to-day, that oftentimes go to bed without saying their prayers, and yet have as much peace of conscience as if they had done it? I think a person hath gone a great length in hardness of heart, when he can slight known duties, and yet not be grieved; yea, it is a token that they have not only to do with a hardened conscience, but with a hardened will. Are there not many persons, that notwithstanding of the slighting of known duties, yet never had a broken heart therefore? Doth not the misbeliever slight the commandment of faith, and yet not weep for it? Doth not the secure Christian slight the commandment of prayer, and yet not be grieved therefore? Doth not the presumptuous sinner slight self-examination, and yet is not much grieved? And doth not the dissolute sinner, that is under the power of his idols, slight the commandment of mortification, and yet not have a sore heart for it?

Now the *second* thing to which I shall speak from the scope is, I shall propose some considerations to press you to the exercise of all known duties.

The *first* consideration is, it is the Christian which practiseth, and not the Christian which knoweth, to whom the promises are made: would ye know the Christian who hath a right to the promises? It is not the Christian which knoweth his duty, but it is the Christian who doth his duty; this is clear, Matth. vii. 21. 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' I think, if the promises had been annexed to the knowledge of duties, then doubtless Balaam had been in heaven. It is not the knowing Christian, but it is the practising Christian, to whom the promises are made.

The *second* consideration to press you to the exercise of known duties is, it is the Christian that is taken up in practising, and not the knowing Christian that is blessed: would ye know the blessed Christian? It is not he that knows his duty only, but it is he which knoweth his duty and doth it; according to that word, John xiii. 17. 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' Where ye may see happiness is annexed to doing, and not to knowing. I confess, if ye could speak your duty like an angel, and if ye know the smallest command in scripture to be a command lying at your door, yet if ye do it not, ye shall never be blessed. O! know it, there are many knowing persons in hell to-day.

The *third* consideration to press you to practise is, it is the

practising Christian, and not the knowing Christian, that is approven and commended of God; this is clear, Song vii. i. 'How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!' &c. Christ takes first notice of the bride's feet, which is her practice, and commends her for that. Believe it, Christ commends a Christian's feet, more than his eyes: that is, his practice more than his knowledge: it is the practising Christian which shall have that word spoken to him in the day of the Lord, 'Well done, good and faithful servant;' it is not said, well known, good and faithful servant; but it is said, *Well done:* for if ye knew never so much, and yet not practise it, Christ shall never commend you.

The *fourth* consideration to press you to the doing of known duties is, it is not the knowledge, but the practice of duties, which will give peace to a Christian's conscience: if ye would know all the commandments in the Bible, and yet never do one of them, it is nothing: it is not your knowledge that will give your conscience peace. I say this to you, many their knowing, and their slighting of duty in one day, will make their conscience roar like a lion, and they have nothing to answer it. I say unto you, O Christians! if ye would have peace of conscience in the great and terrible day of the Lord, then practise what ye know, and desire to know what ye ought to practise.

The *fifth* consideration is, it is the practice of your duty, and not the knowledge of your duty, by which ye rise up in conformity with God. It is the practising of what ye know, and not the knowledge of what ye should do, that raises you up in conformity with him: if ye knew all that ye should do, and do it not, ye may be strangers to God in respect of conformity with him, as if ye were merely ignorant. I wish there were in these days less knowledge, and more practice; or rather I wish, there were more knowledge and practice both together. I think, the Christians of this time, they sin against a witness in heaven, and a witness against their own conscience. I think, there are some (but few amongst us) in these days, that sinneth out of ignorance: but I would say this, the person that sins out of knowledge, condemns himself; but the person that sins out of ignorance, the law condemns him.

There is this *thirdly*, That I would say to you from the scope, I would have you observing these six things concerning known duties.

And *first*, Many persons are more desirous to know what they should do, than to do what they know; some persons cry out, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?' And the Lord may answer them with this, 'Have not I shewed thee, O man?'

There is this *second* thing which I would have you knowing, the question which shall be proposed to you in the great and notable day of the Lord, it shall not be, 'O man, what knowest thou?' but it shall be, 'O man, what didst thou?' This shall be the question which Christ shall put home to you in that day, 'What didst thou in thy lifetime?' And not, 'What knewest thou in thy lifetime.'

Thirdly, I would say this, believe it, a grain weight of sincerity and practice, is worth a talent of knowledge. It is better to practise as the weakest Christian, than to know as the most excellent angel, not practising what we know. Christ weighs not our graces by quantity, but by quality; not by degrees, but by the truth and reality of them: I say, if thou knew never so much, a grain-weight of sincerity and practice in God's sight, is more worth than it all. If thou wert as eloquent as Apollos, and as wise as Solomon, and could speak with as many tongues as Paul, and if ye knew and understood all mysteries, yet if ye do not practise your duties, it is all to no purpose.

Fourthly, I would say this, the slighting of known duties hath many sad disadvantages waiting upon them; and I shall name these four unto you. *First*, The slighting of duties, it is that which makes Christians weary in duties: is there any person here that slights duties at such and such a time? I prophesy this to thee, thou shalt weary of duties ere long; this is clear, Isa. xliii. 22. 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.' I say, slighting of duties, and wearying in duties, they will not be long asunder. *Secondly*, Slighting of known duties brings on much hardness and stupidity of heart, according to that word in Neh. ix. 16. where disobedience and hardness of heart are knit together. Would ye know the reason why so many persons are under so much deadness, and under so many bonds? It is because they slight known duties. *Thirdly*, The slighting of known duties, doth these three things to our conscience, it either mars the peace of conscience, or else it hardens the conscience. Or, *thirdly*, it lulls our conscience asleep. I wonder how any of us can call ourselves tender, since there is so much slighting of that we ought to do. Are there not many Christians, which may soon tell all their private prayers that they make to God? There is a *fourth* disadvantage, which waits on the slighting of known duties, and it is this, the Christian who slights duty sometimes, that duty which a Christian doth, it is exceeding formal: there are some Christians which slight prayer one day, and the second day, and it is one to a hundred the third day, when that person prays, it is but mere formality. O! what makes Christians pray so weakly? It is, be-

cause they teach their hearts the art of praying formally, by slighting of duty.

Fifthly, I would say this to you, the slighting of known duty is the first step of the sin against the Holy Ghost: this is clear in Heb. xii. 26. 'For if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.' I will tell you what is betwixt the sin of slighting known duties, and the sin against the Holy Ghost, there is no more betwixt them both, but that word *wilfulness;* and what knowest thou, but thy slighting of duties may come to wilfulness ere long? Ye would know this, that under the law, there were sacrifices for sins of ignorance, and likewise for sins of infirmities, but there was no sacrifice for presumptuous sins. Now, if this be the first step towards the sin against the Holy Ghost, I am sure there are some here which have gone this length; yea, and I fear a little further: now, will ye take home this conviction, and I will say this, let the person which is not guilty of this offence amongst us, take up the first stone and cast at us. I suppose our conscience might accuse us, and we might steal out one by one. O! the dreadful disadvantages which attend that person who slights known duties. This is a strange thing, our consciences are no more moved at what one can speak of that which is our sin indeed, than though it did not concern us. I suppose there is not one here, but they may write this on their foreheads, *Guilty, guilty.*

Now there is this, *lastly*, which I would say unto you, the day is coming, when the slighters of known duties shall be forced to cry out, Oh! that I had been an ideot, and had never known my duty. I confess, the slighting of known duties, and the sinning against light, shall be a mighty aggravation of our sin. O what terror was it to Judas' conscience, when he came to think of this, "I have sold my Master, and I know I have sinned in so "doing?" And O! what terror likewise will it be to you, when ye shall be convinced of this, "My conscience told me, that this "was my duty, and I would not do it?"

Now the next thing which we shall speak to from the words in general is, that God (in the depth of his condescendency) hath many various ways in making known duties unto a person or people; this is clear from the words, where God having pressed duties upon his people by the voice of his ministers, now he sends a more sad and terrible preacher to them, 'even a threatening rod.' Now this is clear, that God hath many ways in pressing people to their duties, Isa. v. 4. 'What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?' &c. This is also eminently clear in Song v. 2. 'Open to me, my sister, my spouse.' And if that will not lie, he will knock at the door, and say, It is

'the voice of my beloved that knocketh.' And if this will not do it, he will use arguments to persuade her, 'Open to me, my sister:' is not that an argument! Yea, he will give her another, 'For my head is filled with dew, and my hair with the drops of the night.' And if all these will not do it, Christ 'will put in his hand at the hole of the door:' which speaks this, "That Christ, in the depths of his condescendency, leaves nothing unassayed to press people to their duty;" this is also clear, Deut. ix. 26, 27. where 'he sets life and death, blessings and cursings' before them, to press them to their duty. I confess, there are many in heaven to-day, that Christ never took the half of the pains on them, as he hath taken on some of us. And there are many in hell to-day, upon whom Christ took never half so much pains, as he hath done on some of us; and is it not then a wonder, that we are not sent away to hell likewise? Now I will tell you six great voices or means wherewith God presseth people to their duty.

The *First* voice is, the voice of threatenings; all the threatenings which are in the scripture, this is the voice of them all, O give obedience to your duty. This is remarkably clear, from that choice and remarkable place, Jer. xxxvi. 3, 6, 7. 'Therefore go thou and read the roll which thou hast written from my mouth,' &c. Baruch is commanded to read all the threatenings of God to his people; and what is the precious end he hath before him? 'It may be they will present their supplications before the Lord, and will return every one from his evil way,' &c. This is the very end and scope of God's threatenings, that persons may present their prayers before him, and he will shake the rod over our heads for this end. Therefore, I say, give the threatenings of God (which are his messengers) that which they require, and it is, to put the rod by the door.

The *second* great voice whereby God sometimes presseth home duties upon folk is, by the voice and rod of these sad afflicting dispensations which we meet with. This is indeed the end of them, that persons would give obedience to this command of God; this is clear in the very scope, where he presseth them 'to hear the voice of the rod, that they might give obedience to their duty. And it is also clear from that sweet and excellent promise, Ezek. xx. 37. 'And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.' I say, the very great end and design of God, in sending rods is, that persons may be engaged to their duty.

The *third* voice wherewith God presseth people to their duty is, by the voice of the promises; what is the great voice of the covenant of promises? It is, give obedience to commanded duties; this is clear in Ezek. xi. 19, 20. 'And I will give them one

heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them,' &c. As it were, all the great promises of the covenant have this promise, 'Obey, and ye shall live;' it is obedience that leadeth us to the possession of the promises.

The *fourth* voice whereby God presseth people to the doing of known duties is, by the voice of all the mercies which we meet with, I say, the voice of them all is this, 'O! give obedience to his commandments;' yea, this is the very language of mercies. All the great things which God hath done to you, what is the scope and end of them all? It is, 'O! will ye come and obey?'

Fifthly, Doth not the great voice of our consciences, and of all the convictions which God rooves upon them, do they not say, O! give obedience, and obey him with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength?'

There is this *last* voice whereby God presseth people to the doing of known duties, and it is by the voice of all the public ordinances; what is the great voice of all those preachings, which we daily preach unto you, but this, O! give obedience to the commands?

Now I would say this unto you, O people of Glasgow, O! hath not God spoken to you by all these voices? Hath he not spoken unto you by mercies? Hath he not spoken unto you by threatenings? By the voice of the promises? By the voice of the rod? By the voice of our consciences? And by the voice of public ordinances? Oh! look that in the twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus, be not Glasgow's plagues. Lord keep this place from gospel-condemnation; 'For it is a fearful and dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;' yet seven times more, I fear, be your plague. O! what can God do more to us than he hath done? Have we not pressed this duty upon you, that ye would embrace Christ, and that this duty might be your delight? If Christ cannot allure us to give our hearts away to him, in a manner, he will force us to give our hearts to him. I confess, it is sad to slight and disobey the voice of the rod; God hath two times fearfully shaken the threatening rod of his wrath over the city of Glasgow, in a few years, look that so many menacings of God's rods be not the forerunner of some sad stroke from the Lord. Now this is your duty, to be hearkening to his voice. This is Christ's first word, and his last word, and it is his best word. O then, take him, and embrace him. I think there be seven steps of judgment, which are like to overtake us, if we hearken not to his voice. I say, God hath spoken much, and what can he speak more? And what can he do more? And

what can we do less to him? I say, all the slightings of these threatenings of God to you, they are the forerunner of these seven remarkable steps of judgment.

The *first* step of judgment, which ordinarily doth befal slighters and disobeyers of God's voice is, God shall slight their voice when they cry unto him; and Oh! is it any wonder that God stops his ears at all our prayers, because it is known that we stop our ears to his precious invitation and cry, which Christ hath to us, O! take me? Therefore, I say, O! give Christ your hearts, and then he will hear your voice.

There is a *second* step of judgment, which ordinarily befals these, who slight these great and precious voices, by which he is speaking to us, and it is this, be afraid, that at last thou come not to this, that thou shalt have no answer from God, that God shall speak no more unto thee; yea, that thou come not to this, that God shall speak his last words unto thee, and have no more to say. I confess, when God goeth from preaching to rods, it is an evidence that we are hard to be persuaded. It is said, 'When he makes the rods our teachers, that we will not be taught by them:' though I think, that that were a blessed cross, that should make us come to Christ. I think, Christ must do to us, as Absalom did to Joab, he sent to Joab to come to him, and he came not; Absalom then set his corn-fields on fire, so that at last he might come. So I think, Christ sets our corn-fields on fire, that we may be constrained to come to him.

There is a *third* step of our judgment, and it is this, I fear that sad and lamentable word is like to befal us, if we continue to slight this gospel, Ezek. v. 2. 'That all flesh may know, that I the Lord have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath, it shall not return any more.' Yea, God hath begun to draw the sword of his justice out of his sheath, and who knows when he will put it up again? Is there any person who hath confidence or persuasion, that God will quickly sheath the sword which he hath drawn against us?

The *fourth* step of judgment, which lights down upon those that slight the voice of God's threatening rod is, that which I think is more sad, Ezek. xxi. 10, 11. 'The sword is sharpened and furbished, that it may glitter, and that it may make a sore slaughter, that it may be given into the hand of the slayer.' And what know ye, but your disobedience to all these voices, by which God hath been speaking to you, hath made him to draw his sword, and he is to deliver into the hand of the slayer? And oh! who shall be the slayer, into whose hand the sword shall be delivered?

There is this, *fifthly*, which shall be a step of our judgment,

if we continue to slight all these voices, by which God doth speak to us, and it is that word, Ezek. xx. 31. 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you.' I will cease now to have correspondence with you any more.

There is this *sixth* step of judgment, which may and shall befal us, if we go thus on to slight all the voices of the Lord to us, and it is that word in Ezek. xxiv. 13. 'I would have purged thee, and thou wouldst not be purged, thou shalt not be purged any more, till my fury,' &c.

There is this *last* step of our judgment, which I think is the cape-stone of all the rest, if we continue in all our slightings of the voices by which God speaks to us. By all appearance there shall be one of these two decrees past in heaven against us: *First*, Either that in Hos. iv. 7. 'Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone;' or, *secondly*, that decree in Rev. xxii. 11. 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still,' &c. *I say*, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the day of provocation: Glasgow is yet within speaking terms to God. O! who knows how long it shall be so? Now, if ye will not hear him in the still voice of the gospel, O! will ye hear him especially in the whirlwind? There is nothing that will befal us, which will be the cape-stone of our misery so much as that, when Christ shall come and take his farewel. I think there are few of us who are here, who are within the sight of Christ; but I am sure there are many here who are within speaking terms to Christ.

Now, what doth he require and call for at your hands? Doth not all the promises in the covenant say, 'O come and take him?' Doth not all the rods and sad dispensations which we meet with say, 'O come and take him?' Doth not all the threatenings in the law say unto you, 'O come and take him?' And doth not all your convictions of conscience, whereby your need of Christ is discovered, say this unto you, 'O come and take him?' Are ye not surrounded about with many voices, that cry out this unto the city, 'O come and take him?' Therefore, O harden not your hearts to this pleasant voice. I have only these seven words to speak to you, and I shall close.

And, *First*, God hath a threefold rod, whereby he maketh himself known to a people. 1. He hath the rod of his mouth, whereby he makes known his word to us. 2. There is the rod of his hand, and that is, affliction and crosses. 3. There is the iron-rod of destruction, when God doth utterly destroy, that destruction shall not rise up the second time. Now God hath been long speaking to you by the rod of his mouth, and by the rod of his afflictions and crosses; and O! now beware, lest he come and

speak to you by the iron rod of destruction: look that the treaty which is betwixt Christ and you be not broken. O! be persuaded to lay hold upon your time, while it is with you.

Secondly, I would say this word unto you, I think the slighting of the sad and lamentable threatenings of God, which he hath threatened and denounced against you, is a sad forerunner of some sad strokes from the Lord. Are there not many persons which slight threatenings through the want of faith? They believe not that such a threatening is true, and therefore I think it is like, that God will preach to your senses, before you believe what he now preaches to your ear. I say, the day is coming, that before the threatenings of God be believed by some of you, he must preach to your sense, and make you to feel that which ye would not believe. And are there not many that will not make use of the threatenings, because they believe the threatenings are not to them? And therefore they make not particular application of the threatenings to themselves. I confess, I think it were good for every one of us, to take home the threatenings to our own bosom.

Thirdly, Some will not take and make use of the threatenings, because they mistake what is their meaning. There are some, that let Christ threaten them what he will, they are still in the dark, and cry out, O! what doth Christ mean by his threatenings? That is clear from the practice of the Jews, John vii. 33, 34. compared with the 35th and 36th verses, Christ threatens them with this, 'Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.' Now, what hinders them to make application of this threatening? It is in verses 35, 36, 'What manner of saying is this that he saith, ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither ye cannot come? Will he go to the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?' So they knew not the meaning of the threatening, and that hinders them to apply it.

The *fourth* reason why many persons make not application of the threatenings, is this, ignorance of their own condition. Some persons will be living under such a sin, and yet when that sin is threatened, they will not apply it, because they know not their sin. Are there not some persons, that will not take with threatenings for their worldly-mindedness, because they call their worldly-mindedness frugality? Are there not some persons, that when a minister threatens against presumption, they will not take with it, because they think their presumption faith and confidence? And are there not many things threatened against hypocrisy, and few of them applied? And this is, because we think our hypocrisy, sincerity.

Fifthly, This mars the application of threatenings to many, because God hath a mind to destroy them; therefore they do not apply threatenings. That is a terrible word which is spoken of the sons of Eli, in 2 Sam. ii. 25. 'Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.' Some God hath a mind to destroy, and therefore they do not apply threatenings.

There is this *sixth* ground why persons will not make application of threatenings, and it is, because ordinarily some persons are possessed with high thoughts of themselves, and too much of self-love. There is nothing mars the application of threatenings so much as self-love; we have no will to believe any sad things against ourselves.

Lastly, There is this which mars the application of threatenings, and it is, our not knowing what a sad and sinful thing it is to slight, and not apply threatenings. I confess, I think it is a question that is hard to determine, whether the slighting of promises, or the slighting of commands, or the slighting of threatenings, be greatest sin? But I am sure of this, our slighting of threatenings is the rise of our slighting of promises, and likewise the rise of our slighting of commands. Now, I shall say no more, O! that ye were persuaded to hearken to God, that Christ might not be provoked to depart from you, and take his farewel. And to him who is able to help you to hold him, 'till the breaking of the day,' we desire to give praise.

SERMON I.

MICAH vi. 9. *The Lord's voice crying unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

IT is not much though a Christian be put in a furnace, hot seven times more than ordinary, if one in the form and likeness of the Son of man walk up and down with him in the furnace. Is it not Christ's presence, which makes a wilderness like the garden of the Lord? Is it not Christ's presence, which makes afflictions pleasant? Is it not Christ's presence, which makes a crown of thorns, a crown of joy? Is it not Christ's presence, which makes heaven pleasant? And must it not be Christ's presence, that must make the earth pleasant also? I confess, desertion under the cross, is one of the most sad and afflicting dispensations which a Christian can meet with; but, however, ere long there will be a blessed exchange of cups, that instead of the cup of bitterness which is presented to a Christian to drink, while

he is here below) he shall have a cup of eternal consolations that is above, presented unto him from the hand of the Lord.

I think a Christian may be poor in possession, but rich in hope. I think a Christian may not have much as to his sensible enjoyments, but may not he cast up his eyes unto the eternal inheritance, and cry out, yonder is my portion, in that land are my lines cast? There are these four things that I would say unto you before I come to the words.

The *first* thing that I would have you taking notice of, is this, there are three things which a Christian may meet with which are unspeakable. 1. Sometimes a Christian may meet with an unspeakable sorrow, so that he cannot make language of it, because of the anxiety of his heart, but is forced to cry out, 'My stroke is heavier than my groaning.' 2. A Christian may meet with unspeakable mercy, he may meet with such a mercy and token of love from the hand of the Lord, that if he were put to it, he could not make language of it; he would say no more to the commendation of his mercy, but this, 'What shall I say more?' He hath spoken it, and himself hath done it.' 3. A Christian may meet with an unspeakable joy, he may be brought to that case and condition, that he cannot make language of his joy; according to that word, 1. Pet. i. 8. 'Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.'

Secondly, I would have you taking notice of this, that is exceeding much of the concernment of a Christian, to believe and close with this truth, that there is not a grain weight of affliction in this cup, which infinite wisdom doth not think fit should be there, and which infinite love did not put there: to know and rest upon this, that infinite wisdom and love was at the mixing of the cup, (and his tender heart will carve no more out to us than we are able to bear) this is an help to patience.

Thirdly, I would have you taking notice of this, I think there are some Christians that are forced to bless God more for their crosses, than their mercy; and that they have been forced, in their darkest nights, to cry out, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.'

There is this, *fourthly*, which I would have you taking notice of, that the cross of a Christian, it hath two faces, an outward face, and an inward face; and the outward face of the cross often-times seems the most unpleasant: but O! if a Christian could win to see the inside of his cross, he might sit down by the rivers of Babel, and there pen songs of praise to God, even praise for this, 'that he hath been afflicted. O! it is comfortable to the Christian, that Christ hath gone to heaven by the way of the cross; that his blessed feet have trodden that way, and that his precious lips have drunk of that up.

But to come to the words, we told you, that there were five things in the words to be considered. *First*, That there was an excellent exhortation given to the people of Israel and Samaria, which in short is this, 'Hear ye the voice of the rod, and who hath appointed it.' And from this exhortation ye may take notice of five things: *First*, That every cross and sad dispensation, which a Christian meets with, it hath a voice and language in it; therefore, saith he, 'Hear ye the voice of the rod.' As if he had said, "Take notice what the rod says, and what it calls for from "you." The *second* thing to take notice of from this command and exhortation, is this, that it is the duty of a Christian to observe and give obedience unto what the rod speaks, and calls for; therefore is the command given forth, 'Hear ye the voice of the rod.' The *third* thing that we take notice of from this command is, that there is a great unwillingness in persons to hear what the rod speaks; and therefore the command is put home, 'Hear ye the voice of the rod.' *Fourthly*, Take notice of this, that the voice of the rod, and the voice of him that hath appointed it, are one and the same very thing; therefore these two are knit together, 'Hear ye the voice of the rod, and him that hath appointed it.' There is this, *lastly*, which we would have you taking notice of from this command and exhortation, it is a great point of spiritual wisdom for a Christian, to take up and hear the voice of the rod; therefore it is said, 'The man of wisdom shall see thy name.' It is not every man that can take up what the rod speaks; it is only the man that is endued with much heavenly wisdom from God.

Now, as for the *first* thing that we speak to from the words, viz. that every rod which a Christian meets with, it hath a voice in it. Before I speak to this, I would have you to take along these considerations.

First, It is a singular and most remarkable step of the good-will of God, when he doth manifest the meaning of a rod to a person or people, Job xxxiii. 10. 'He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.' Which is brought in as a singular favour from God; that is, he makes them to know what the rod speaks. Elihu puts such a note of mercy upon this, that he thinks it a step of delivery from the rod, 'He delivers the poor from affliction.' How is this, that he opens their ears, and seals their instruction? It is, when God makes a person to take up the meaning of the rod: for when he makes them to understand the voice of the rod, it is a half delivery from the rod. Do you not know this, that when the cause of a disease is known, it is half healed? So when the end that God hath in sending rods is known and taken up, we may say it is half removed.

Secondly, The Christians of old have taken much pains to know the voice of the rods that they met with; as is clear from 2 Sam. xxi. 1. where the land of Israel being three years under famine, David went and enquired of the cause of that rod. And it is likewise clear from Job vii. 20. where Job is exceeding desirous to know, why God set him up as a mark to his arrow, and that he was become a burden to himself.

Thirdly, We would have you to take notice of this, that it is exceeding anxious for a tender Christian to be under a silent rod, to be under such a dispensation that he knows not the language of it; this is clear in Job iii. 23. where Job makes this the cape-stone of his sorrow, that his way was hid; that is, he knew not what was the reason of God's contending with him after such a way: as likewise it is clear in Job x. 2. where Job is put to propose that question to God, 'Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me?'

The *fourth* consideration that we would have you taking along with you, is this, it is exceeding hard for a Christian to profit by a rod, till once he take up the meaning of it; and I shall give you these three grounds, why it is so hard for a Christian to profit by a rod, till he know the voice and meaning of it. 1. Because it is hard for a Christian to win to submission to the rod, till he know the voice of it; it is the knowledge of the meaning of the rod that makes a Christian to cry out, 'I was dumb, and opened not my mouth.' 2. Because as long as the meaning of the rod is hid from a Christian, he knoweth not what remedy to go about to deliver himself from that rod; but when he knoweth the reason of God's contending with him, he hath a clear way before him how to win out from the cross. 3. This is the reason why a Christian cannot profit by the rod, till he know the voice and meaning of it, he cannot win to a solid closing with this truth, that God is in the rod, till he win to the knowledge of the voice of the rod in some measure; there is nothing more will help a Christian to cry out, 'God is in the rod,' than this, his knowing the reason of God's contending with him.

There is this *fifth* consideration that we would propose, a Christian may be long under a rod, before he know the voice and language of it: we conceive, this is clear in 2 Sam. xxi. 1. where the land of Israel is under three years famine, before David could take up the reason of God's contending with him. It is not to be supposed, but David had made frequent supplications to God, for understanding the meaning of that rod, and yet there are three years interveening before he can know it.

The *last* consideration that we would propose unto you is, when a Christian wins to take up the voice and language of the

rod he ought not to delay, but presently to go about and answer it; this is clear in the practice of David, when he knew the reason of God's contending with him, he immediately sets about to remove it. I confess, it is a fault amongst many, they are more desirous to have their crosses removed, than to have their crosses sanctified unto them; some pray to have the bitterness out of the cross, more than to have the bitterness of sin removed out of the cross.

Now, in speaking to the *first* thing in the words, *viz.* that every rod and dispensation of God hath a voice and language in it, I shall speak a little to these four things: *First*, How a Christian may win to take up the meaning of the rod in particular afflictions. *Secondly*, I would speak a little to some mistakes, in taking up the voice and language of such a rod and afflicting dispensation. *Thirdly*, I would speak to this, how a Christian may be helped to give obedience to the voice of the rod. *Fourthly*, I shall speak a little to eight or nine special voices which the rod oftentimes hath: as for the *first* of these, *viz.* how a Christian may win to take up the meaning of the rod and sad dispensation, I shall prescribe unto you these six ways.

First, By making serious application to the throne of grace, that God would give you light concerning such a rod; this is remarkably clear in that instance, in Gen. xxv. 22. where Rebecca, being under such a particular rod, and she knew not God's way in it, therefore she went and enquired of the Lord, and she received a particular and distinct answer to her case. And it is also clear in the practice of David, 2. Sam. xxi. 1. Israel being under a great rod of famine, David went and enquired of the Lord concerning the meaning of it, and he met with a distinct answer. And this is likewise clear in Job x. 2. where Job, being in the dark concerning the meaning of the rod, he desires 'that God would shew him wherefore he contends with him.' I would tell you seven sad cases which a Christian may be put to which Christ hath exceeding good skill to resolve, and it is this, Song i. 7. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks rest at noon? &c." When a Christian knoweth where Christ is feeding, to go to him, he will sweetly resolve that question: for ye may know this, a Christian may be brought to these two steps of desertion: 1. Christ may be gone. And 2. Ye know not in all the world where to find him; as in John xx. 13. as that instance of Mary; and in Job xxiii. 3. Job hath not only lost God, but also he knoweth not where to find him.

The *second* case which Christ hath exceeding good skill to resolve, is this, 'who is the Lord, that I may believe on him? That

case or question which the blind man was put to, John ix. 36. O! will not Christ sweetly resolve that question? Is there any person that hath this question, 'Who is Christ, that I may believe him?' The *third* case or question which Christ hath exceeding good skill to resolve, is this, 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Is there any here that is put to that question? Go to Christ, and he can sweetly resolve it to you. The *fourth* question which Christ can best resolve, is that question which Paul had, 'What wilt thou have me to do?' The *fifth* case in which it is best to go to Christ to get resolved is, when a person is brought to this strait, 'I know not the mind of the Lord; go to God, and humbly ask, 'O! why am I thus?' There is this *sixth* case, and it is, Job vii. 20. "I have sinned, and what shall I do to thee, O thou preserver of men? When thou art put to this case, Christ can answer sweetly thus, 'Only acknowledge thine iniquity.' The *last* case which Christ can sweetly resolve, is in the words before the text, 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?' If thou be put to this question, no answer can be given to it but this, 'The sacrifice of the Lord are a broken and contrite heart. Now this is the *first* way how a Christian may win to know the voice and meaning of the rod, even to make serious application to God, that he would make known to them his name.

There is this *second* way by which a Christian may win to know the voice and meaning of the rod, if the rod was timed to thee, when thy heart was under much distance from God, that probably is the meaning of the rod, 'It is good for thee to draw near to God.' Or, if the rod be timed to a Christian, 'when he is much taken up in the pursuit after the things of the world;' and if thy rod triest thee, when thou art under much formality in going about duties, then, by all appearance, that is the voice of the rod to thee, 'to stir up thyself to take hold on God. So if a Christian would win to know the meaning of the rod, let him compare his present frame with the timing of the rod unto him.

The *third* way how a Christian may win to know the voice and meaning of the rod is, by reflecting on the manner and circumstances of the rod. For this is certain, the sins of a people or person may be engraven on the rod in very legible letters, 'so that he that runs may read them.' There are sometimes that the rod doth preach our sins so plainly, that we need not to interpret it; this is clear, Judges i. 6. 7. there is such a relation between Adonibezek's judgment and his sin that he might read his judgment, as he did his sins, in his stroke: saith he, "Threescore and ten kings having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table, as I have done, so God hath requited me, &c." For now was he taken prisoner,

and his thumbs and great toes cut off. And it is clear from that word Solomon hath, Prov. xxi. 23. "He that stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry, and God shall not hear him. Zech. vii. 13. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts." Where ye may see a divine proportion and analogy betwixt the rod and the sin.

The *fourth* way how a Christian may win to know the voice and meaning of the rod, and it is, by observing what hath been the mind of the Lord, and what he calleth for from his people in scripture, when they were put under such a rod and anxious dispensation: search what was God's mind to the godly in scripture under such a rod, and by all appearance, it is yet his mind in the same cross; according to that general rule, Rom. xv. 4. "For whatsoever things are written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope."

The *fifth* way for a Christian to win to know the meaning of the rod, is to be much in observing the circumstances of the rod; there may be circumstances in a rod by which a Christian may win to exceeding much light concerning what is the Lord's mind by such a rod: it is known, the observing of the circumstances of a rod will help a Christian to these three things: 1. That such a rod is from the hand of the Lord. 2. That God, in the midst of wrath, remembereth mercy. 3. It will help a Christian to know the voice and language of the rod; sometimes in the cross itself, a Christian cannot read love, and yet in the circumstances of the cross, he may win to read very much love.

There is this *sixth* and *last* way, how a Christian may win to the knowledge of the voice and meaning of the rod, and it is, to be considering, that all the rods and dispensations which a Christian meets with, hath one of these three ends: *First*, The rod is either sent to a Christian, that he may mortify his predominant idols. Or, *Secondly*, For exercise of his predominant grace. Or else, *Thirdly*, That he may be put to the exercise of that, which ought to be his predominant duty.

These are voices and languages of the cross, which a Christian meets with: and I would only, by the way, say these two things to you: *First*, It is easier to bear a rod patiently, which is for the trial and exercise of our predominant grace, than to bear a rod patiently, which is for the mortifying of our predominant idol. There is no rod which a Christian can bear worse, than the rod which strikes at the root of his predominant idols: so a proud man, he can bear any cross better than reproach; and a worldly-minded man, can bear any cross better than poverty;

so the cross which stands in direct opposition to our predominant idols, we have great difficulty to bring our hearts to patient submission under it: are there not many, that when their idols are stricken, they cry out with that man in Judges, Judges xvi. 24. 'They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?' Is it not certain, that when God strikes sometimes at the root of our predominant idols, we cry out with Jonah, 'That it is better for me to die than to live?' Though I may say, the cross which we have least will to meet with, is ordinarily best for us. For (if so we may speak) our will and well are seldom or never knit together; but precious Christ, his will and our well are oftentimes knit together. *Secondly*, I would say this by the way, there are ordinarily some analogy betwixt our crosses and our sins: if the Egyptians did kill all the male-children of the Israelites, by casting them into the river; God doth likewise kill all the first-born in the land of Egypt; and if Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire from heaven; and if the Sodomites be taken up with the fire of lust, God will bring down fire from heaven and consume them.

Now the *second* thing which we promised to speak a little unto, was to some mistakes which Christians have concerning the meaning of the rod.

And *first*, Many think, indeed, the cross speaks wrath, when it speaks love; and some, when they cannot read love in the hand of God, they think it is impossible to read love in his heart: some think, that love and the rod cannot be together at all. I say, God may never love a person more, than when he is correcting him. But, *first*, I would say to a person under that mistake, we never know by any of those things, whether love or hatred belongs to the person that is afflicted; 'For all things happen alike to all; as it happens to the fool, so it happens to the wise man; to the righteous, even as to the wicked.' *Secondly*, I would say this to the believer that is under this mistake, he reads wrong, that reads wrath only upon the cross; for it is certain, love is written in dark characters upon it, and the spiritual man may read them; hence it is, Heb. xii. 5. 6. we are commanded to remember the exhortation that speaks unto us, as unto sons, 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.'

The *second* mistake concerning the meaning of the cross is, some think that God can never answer their prayers, so long as he is plaguing them; according to that strange divinity, Job ix. 16. 'If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice.' So this is the mistake, all the answers of their prayers are nothing, if God be contending with them.

The *third* great mistake concerning the meaning of the rod is, when persons begin to dispute their interest, when they meet with such a rod and sad dispensation, and when they do not (indeed) see what is the reason of God's contending with them; when he puts them into the furnace, presently to sit down, and reject their confidence, and cast away their hope; this is certainly a great mistake of the meaning of the rod.

The *fourth* great mistake of the voice and language of God's threatening rod is, for a person to think religion but vanity, and an empty thing under the cross. A Christian may be brought to this, 'Now I would not give a plack for godliness, it is not worth at all;' as is clear from Psalm lxxiii. 13, 14. where he takes notice, 'He was plagued every morning, and the wicked was in prosperity about him;' he cries out, 'Verily, I have washed my hands in innocency, and cleansed my heart in vain:' yea, it is hard for a person not to cast off religion, when God is contending with him. O! it is hard to have a great respect unto the ways of godliness under the cross.

There is this *fifth* mistake under the cross, and it is, to dispute the fellowship a Christian hath with God; according to that word of Gideon, Judges vi. 13. 'If the Lord be with us, how then is all this evil come upon us?' The Christian will cry out, I cannot reconcile God's heart and his hand, I cannot reconcile love in God, and his being with me, and this cross and rod.

Now, *Thirdly*, I would speak a little to this, how a Christian may be helped to obey the voice of the rod; and we conceive, if ye will take along these things with you, ye may be helped to obey what the rod calls for at your hand.

And *First* then, if the rod call for the mortifying of such a particular lust and idol, it is incumbent for you presently to sit down and bring up your hearts to a spiritual detestation of such an idol, that if God be punishing you for your idols, ye must subscribe a bill of divorce to them, and cry out, 'What have I any more to do with idols?' And say to them, get you hence, and cast them away to the moles and bats.

There is a *second* way to help, how a Christian may win to the obedience of the voice of the rod, and it is, if the voice of the rod be for the mortifying of such an idol. I intreat you presently sit down, and study the disadvantage of such an idol; study always what hazard there is by keeping thy soul constantly knit to it, that when the voice of the rod is to thee, O quit such an idol, or such a Delila, thou must then study to know what it is to thy disadvantage to keep such an idol, and what it is to thy advantage to quit it. I confess there are some, that their idols are mortified to their light, before they are mortified to

their affections; yea, there are some they have constrained mortification, their idols are mortified, and die with them, before they be mortified to their idols.

Thirdly, If the voice of the rod be this, stir up such a grace, and be much in the exercise and practice of it; then, I say, study to know that there is as much spiritual advantage in the real and spiritual exercise of such a grace, as ye can lose by all the rods ye can meet with. Is it not certain, that Job gained as much spiritual advantages by the exercise of his faith, and of his patience; yea, much more than in losing all the things that he lost? If a Christian once knew that his riches consisted in the exercise of his grace, there would not be a rod sent for the trial and exercise of his grace, but he would take it cheerfully in his own arms.

The *fourth* way, how a Christian may be helped to win to obey the voice of the rod, and it is, if the voice of the rod be for the trial of thy predominant grace, and for the exercise of it; then, I say, consider this, that the trial and exercise of thy predominant grace, by the rod, it shall have (if it be sanctified) a glorious and excellent issue and peace; it is the rod that hath most noble advantages, that is immediately erected for the trial of thy predominant grace.

The *sixth* way, how a Christian may win to obey the voice of the rod, and it is, if the voice of the rod be, that thou should set about the exercise of such a duty, then endeavour seriously that all impediments and lets to that duty be laid aside; as if the cross calls for the exercise of faith, or if the cross calls for the exercise of prayer; then, I say, remove all things that may be impediments to hinder thee from the exercise thereof, or from the exercise of faith; leave, as it were, thy servants and thy asses at the foot of the mountain, and go thou up and sacrifice all thy idols and lusts.

The *seventh* and *last* way, how a Christian may be helped to win to obey the voice of the rod is, if the voice of the rod be, to be much in the exercise of such a duty, then study to have the lustre of duty, and the beauty thereof commended unto thee. O! prayer is a thing which doth much good unto us. I think, this is the reason why God hath contended with many, that he would make duties sweet to them, and that he would make sin bitter.

Now the *fourth* thing that I shall speak a little unto is, what ought to be a Christian's duty, while he is walking under a silent rod, and knoweth not the voice of it; and I would give you these five directions, how a Christian should carry himself under a silent rod.

First, He would know God to be just, though he knoweth not for what he contends with him.

Secondly, He would be serious in making supplications to God, to know the distinct meaning of such a rod; I confess, sometimes we take the rod to be silent, because we cannot hear the voice of it; but oftentimes the silence of the rod is from this, that we know not the voice of it, and we hear it not, though he speak to us in an audible language: but if a Christian be under a silent rod, it becomes him then to go to God with this, 'I have sinned, I will do so no more, show me wherein I have offended.'

There is this *third* direction which I would give to a Christian under a silent rod, he would be serious to know what is the reason of God's keeping up his mind from him in such a rod. I say, when the rod is dark, and the cross silent, it is suitable then for thee to say, what is the reason of this, that God doth not let me understand the voice and language of the rod? I confess, there may be sad things hinted at, when God puts a Christian under dark and dumb crosses; however, although it be so, I think it is good for us to be walking submissively in the dark: for he will lead the blind in the way they know not: sometimes it is better for us to have dumb and silent crosses, than to have a speaking cross.

The *fourth* direction is, the Christian would study to bring his heart to a tender and spiritual frame: for sometimes our not understanding the voice of the rod, is this, because we are not spiritual.

Lastly, I would give this direction to the Christian, who is under a dark and silent cross, study at that time to have thy heart most united to Christ, for at that time thou art most ready to fall. O! that is a time when the devil fishes most, because that is the Christian's drumly water, so to speak. O! it is known the devil never gets any advantage over a Christian so much, as when he knows not the meaning of the cross, I confess the devil will tell you a false meaning of a cross: he can interpret the language of a cross after another way than God doth interpret it.

Now being to close our discourse, I shall name these eight or nine observations concerning the cross, which I would have you taking notice of.

First, When a Christian doth first meet with a cross, he may be patient and submissive under it; and yet if the thread of the affliction be spun out to any length, he may turn impatient. I confess, it is not much the first day that the cross meets with us to be patient; but let the cross lie on us, then we will cry out, 'Why is it that God deals thus with me?' This is clear in the

practice of Job, when first he met with the cross, he could take it in his arms, and cry out, 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name.' But let the cross lie a little while on Job, then he will cry out, 'I choose strangling and death rather than life.' A green wound is half whole, (as we use to speak) but let once our wound begin to fester, then we will be impatient.

The *second* observation which we would have you to take notice of concerning the cross is, there are five sorts of blasphemy, which one that is under a cross may fall into: *First*, He may fall into that blasphemy of calling God unjust; according to that word, Ezek. xviii. 5. 'Yet ye say the way of the Lord is not equal, &c.' The *second* sort of blasphemy is, when we call God unfaithful; according to that strange word, Jer. xv. 18. 'Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?' O! do we not think, that God is not half so good as his word under the cross? The *third* sort of blasphemy is, when we call God weak; there are sometimes we are brought to that, 'Is there no balm in Gilead? And is there no physician there? My stroke is grievous, and my wound is incurable.' Sometimes, when we are under the cross, we think it is above God's power to set us free from it. The *fourth* sort of blasphemy, which a man may have under the cross, and that is, when he chargeth God with changeableness. I think Christians under the cross, are like men first going to sea, when they go first out from the haven, or by a rock, they think that they are standing still, but the land beside them is moving and stirring; so when first we come under the cross, we think God is changeable, but we are still the same. The *fifth* sort of blasphemy, which one may have under the cross, and this is, when he chargeth God with forgetfulness. you know that forgetfulness is the property of an ungrateful man; and O! if you call God ungrateful or unthankful, you may call him any thing. I confess, I think Christ forgets nothing of a Christian but his wrongs.

The *third* observation concerning the cross, is this, it is a speaking evidence of the want of a son-like frame; if the cross do hinder us in the exercise of duties. I confess, little profiting under the cross, speaks this much, that either we are not sons, or have not a son-like frame; for those who are the Lord's children, when folly is bound for them, the rod of correction drives it away: there are many of us in our afflictions, we are of Ahaz's frame, we sin more and more in our afflictions.

The *fourth* observation that I would give you concerning the cross, is this, there are four things which a Christian would take up concerning his cross: *First*, He would take up unspeakable

wisdom in his cross. *Secondly*, He would take up unspeakable love therein. *Thirdly*, He would take up unspeakable justice and holiness in his cross. And, *fourthly*, he would take up these great advantages that flow to him from the spiritual use-making of his cross. Some Christians they can read wisdom, justice, and holiness on a cross, before they can read love upon it: but, however, it is good to take up all these four in the crosses and sad dispensations which you meet with.

There is this, *fifthly*, which I would say concerning the cross, there is not a cross and sad dispensation which a Christian meets with, but is a gift and royal donation sent by the hand of Christ to him: there are some, they look upon the promises as gifts; but I say to thee, thou must look upon thy crosses as gifts also, Philip. i. 29. 'For unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake' And there are some likewise, that look upon their sensible enjoyments, but not on their crosses as gifts. I say, if once a Christian win to know that the cross is a gift, he would likewise win to patience under the cross.

The *sixth* observation concerning the cross is, there are some peaceable fruits of righteousness that redound to a Christian, which is rightly exercised under the cross, Heb. xii. 11. 'Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.' I say sometimes the rod of a Christian is like Aaron's rod, it buds and blossoms in a night, and brings forth pleasant fruit.

The *seventh* observation is, the most rare enjoyments of a Christian, are tristed to the time of his being under the cross; when was it that Jacob saw the angels of God descending and ascending upon that ladder? Was it not when he was forced to lie in the open fields? When was it that these three children saw Christ in the likeness of the Son of man? Was it not when they were in a furnace, when it was hot seven times more than ordinary? When was it that John got such a vision of God? Was it not when he was in the isle of Patmos, for the testimony of Christ? When was it that Ezekiel saw the visions of God? Was it not when he was sitting by the river Chebar, in the land of his captivity? And when was it that Stephen saw the heavens open, and Christ standing at the right hand of God? was it not when they were stoning him to death, for the testimony of Jesus Christ? I say, the most remarkable enjoyments of a Christian are tristed under the cross, according to that word of the Psalmist, 'To the righteous there ariseth light in darkness.'

The *eighth* observation that we would propose concerning the

cross is, oftentimes God trists joy to a Christian under the cross, when a Christian is beginning to lose his hope, and all things, as it were, growing dark about him, then doth light arise unto him, according to that wonderful and strange expression, Zech. xiv. 7. "At the evening time it shall be light, when there is more appearance of a darkness coming on." Yet even at that time it shall be light. Is it not certain, a Christian hath been sitting down at the midnight of his afflictions, crying out, 'My hope and my strength is perished from the Lord;' and yet the Lord hath said to him, even by his dispensations, 'Thou art a liar?' Have we not sometimes been casting away our hope, and the Lord hath loosed our bonds, and we have been as Peter, when he was loosed from his prison, we have been as though we had seen a vision?

Lastly, I would say this to commend the cross, there are strange expressions in the scripture, that may make out to a Christian, that the cross is not such a thing as many take it to be. The *First* expression is in that word, James i. 2. 'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' There are two things in that expression, which may make it strange: 1*st*, A Christian should count it all joy: it had not been so strange, if he had said, count it joy, or rejoice when ye are afflicted; but, O! that is strange, 'Count it all joy when ye are afflicted.' That, 2*dly*, makes it strange, 'Count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations; that is, rejoice ay more and more, when ye meet with many crosses. Then there is this *Second* expression, which may commend the cross, and it is in that word, Job. v. 15. 'Happy is the man whom God correcteth,' &c. There is very much happiness in such a lot and dispensation. Some of us think, there are no people so cursed as those who are afflicted. But, I say, a Christian's afflictions are no small mercies and blessings. The *Third* strange expression, which may commend the cross, is in that word, Job v. 22. 'At destruction and famine shalt thou laugh,' &c. Not to have a sad look, as it were, for all the crosses and afflictions that may come. The *fourth* strange expression, which may commend the cross, is in that word, Rom. v. 3. 'We glory in tribulation,' &c. The *last* strange expression, which may commend the cross, is this, the glorious ends that was upon these persons, who are exercised under the cross; according to that word, James i. 12. 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.' I say, let a Christian comfort himself in this, 'That in six evils he will deliver him, and in seven no evil shall come near him.' Let a Christian be put to never so much affliction, let him comfort himself with this, 'That his Saviour was put to walk up and down on the earth, and had not whereon to lay his head. And

let him likewise comfort himself with this, 'that the day is coming, when he shall enter into those glorious and excellent habitations.' What is the cross of a Christian? is there not much in heaven to comfort them against their crosses? I shall not say much to press Christian submission under the cross; I think it is more suitable to be enquiring after duty under the cross, than to be enquiring how to escape out from under it. It is good to put all in Christ's hand concerning the cross, the manner of it, and the lengthening of it, and also the outgate from under it. Now to him, who is able to make all thing works together for the best, even affliction, unto his people, we desire to give praise.

THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE.

SERMON I.

ROM. vii. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

WHEN the sword of the justice of God was coming down upon us, then our blessed Lord Jesus, in the infinite depth of his unsearchable love and compassion to self-destroying sinners, cried out, with a loud voice, that justice might hold the hand. And as that ram sacrificed for Isaac, so was he willingly content to be 'caught in a thicket,' and to become a spotless and everlasting sacrifice for sinners. He was content to be bruised, that so we might pass free, and his Father's hand might be turned upon the little ones; but notwithstanding 'he had died for our sins, and risen for our righteousness;' yet he hath given to all his followers a spiritual warfare to accomplish, so that they should be continually taken up in contending 'against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places;' or, as the words may be rendered by some, we conceive more appositely, 'In heavenly things. And certainly, there is no discharge in this war, neither any interruption, while we are on this side of eternity. We confess, God might easily have served an inhibition on all our spiritual enemies, that they should no more oppose themselves against a believer after justification. He, in the depth of his unsearchable wisdom, and we may say likewise, infinite love towards his own, hath so contrived their way to heaven, that through many afflictions and tribulations in our spiritual warfare, we must enter there. It is much indeed for a Christian to die a victor after war, though not a triumpher;

that must come after death, and the trophies and rewards of our victory shall then be fully given to us, when our feet shall stand within the gates of the New Jerusalem, and when we shall receive these two glorious and everlasting badges of our victory, 'a crown set upon our head,' having this written upon it, 'It endureth for ever.' A motto which could never be engraven upon any crown here below; and a 'palm put in our hands;' and then indeed we shall sing, as those that divide the spoil, when we have led captivity captive, and sitten down upon a throne which is established for ever. And we conceive, much divine reflection and holy contemplation upon that precious recompence of reward, and that high and inconceivable pitch of dignity, unto which believers and overcomers are to be advanced, would make us with much cheerfulness and alacrity undergo this spiritual warfare. And yet all our triumphing is not suspended, till our war be ended: believe me, there is more real joy in the victory and vanquishing of one lust; yea, more divine satisfaction in a serious pursuit and contending with them, though with very small success to our apprehension, than in the actual enjoyment and fruition of all thy lusts. Thou may hide sin under thy tongue, and have it pleasant to thy taste, yet at last it shall be as the gall of asps, and the poison of dragons. O! put out so much holy generosity and spiritual ambition, that though Satan should offer unto thee all the kingdoms of the world, that thou may fall down and worship him, thou mayest cry out in holy zeal and indignation, 'Get thee behind me Satan.' O that deceitful oratory, and malicious guile wherewith he ensnareth immortal souls, and brings them in subjection! O but the depths of Satan are subtile and great! and he is a man of understanding, that can draw them out, and not be ignorant of his devices; and except we be helped by the candle of the Lord, that discovereth the inward parts of the belly, to know these mysterious subtilities of him, whose name is, 'a deceiver,' they will remain still riddles and mysteries unto us.

But since we are compassed about 'with this body of death, and 'there is a law of our members, rebelling against the law of our mind,' we should be much in groaning for the day of our redemption, when the lawful captive may be delivered, and the prey taken from the mighty, and that blessed decree may come forth, 'O prisoners of hope, go forth and shew yourselves!' We are afraid, that the Christians of this generation have proclaimed a cessation of arms, and have concluded a treaty of peace with their lusts, and a league, not only offensive, but (shall I add this) even defensive; not only that we shall not offend our lusts, but shall defend them: and if once we have sealed this treaty

and agreement with our idols, what can they require more at our hands? we conceive, we may sadly allude unto that word, 'That there is not one amongst forty thousand in Israel, with whom there is a spear and shield seen, in contending in this holy warfare.' O can such a delusion as this overtake you, that ye can be an overcomer without fighting? Is your strength greater than those that have gone before you, that you think you can accomplish this war in one day, and pursue your enemies till ye overtake and consume them? O when shall that day be, when we shall be groaning out daily this mournful ditty, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.'

In the words we conceive, *First*, There is a sweet and pleasant emphasis in that word *me*, speaking so much, that if infinite power and grace were capable of any limitation, and there could be any bounds fixed to it, Paul did conceive he was the bounds and limits of infinite power and grace; if there were an impossibility for grace to save any sinner, it should be impossible for grace to have saved him, who was 'the chiefest of sinners, and less than the least of all saints.' And if each Christian did look upon himself as the greatest debtor to the justice of God, his debt to the infinite grace of God should appear more singular.

Secondly, We may perceive that a Christian's happiness doth consist in a sweet exchange of dominion and governments: once sin did 'reign in his mortal body,' and he is under the dominion of his lusts? but then grace doth step in, and exauctorates and dethrones the former king, and doth reign in the temple of our hearts. This is clear Rom. v. 21. And that is a remarkable word which is there, 'That grace may reign;' the word in the original doth signify so much, 'That grace may play the king, Basileuesi:' and this fulness of grace's dominion, is that the apostle would be at here, and certainly, there is no repentance of this exchange of masters. There is much noise and rumour of complaints amongst people in these days of the exchange of governments, from one species of government to another; we shall leave these debates unto men who desire to exercise their spirits about them, but sure we are of this, that those who are given up to this change, shall have it pass as most legitimate and lawful, by the divine approbation, both of angels and of the souls of just men now made perfect.

Thirdly, The way that Paul taketh here to propose his complaint under the strong prevalency of the body of death, by way of question, 'Who shall deliver me?' doth not import any hesitation about his persuasion of certainty that he at last should sing a song of triumph over his lusts; but only that it would be among the richest, and the most singular monuments and

trophies of the victory of Christ, to save him. Paul did, no doubt, conceive, that amongst all the royal monuments of Christ's conquests, that should be, as it were, hanged about the walls of that higher and glorious palace. Paul should be put in the highest, as having least merit to bring him there, if there could be any merit at all, and most love and grace.

Now, to come more particularly to the words, after Paul hath most divinely set forth that woful opposition and contradiction that was betwixt the unrenewed part and the renewed, and what strong dominion sin had over him, he doth in these words breathe out a sweet desire to be delivered, not only from his actual corruption, but from his original guilt, which here he called *the body of this death*, not only because corruption is a thing which may be easily discerned and known to us, it being, so to speak, a thing which may fall under the object of our sight, being no spirit but a body; but also because of these great multitudes of corruptions that flow from that root of original sin, it having so many different members and parts, which are so diversified and so complete, that they may make up a body, which body, if it be entertained, shall certainly bring and occasion death. So when he is under the strong convictions of his guilt, and hath had a complete discovery of himself, you may see his exercise holden forth in these words, 'O wretched man!' The word in the original, *Talai poros*, signifieth one that is wearied with troublesome and continual combats, with little apparent success; and this doth certainly import, that he was a man much and continually taken up in wrestling against his corruptions, and endeavouring to bring them into subjection unto the obedience of *Christ Jesus*.

And ye may see likewise in these words, the way that Paul took to overcome his lusts, he was much in the exercise of prayer; for the words that we have read, are indeed a short and pathetic prayer. I conceive, that word which is recorded in Isa. xxxviii. 14. 'O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me,' is a sweet paraphrase upon these words.

Fourthly, You may see his great and principal suit to have been, *deliverance from this body of death;* that captive exile was hastening to be delivered, and looking out at the windows of his prison-house, waiting till the jailor should come and open the doors, and take his chains and fetters from off his feet. We confess, these shall not be fully taken off, till we shall be passing through the door of our everlasting rest, and then that woful and sad complaint shall take its everlasting adieu and farewel: for, if we may speak so, the burial-place of sin is before the door of our eternal rest; it then ceaseth to be, when we be-

gin more eminently to have a being. But may we not be ashamed and blush, that we are not more in uttering those inexpressible sighs and groans of the Spirit, under the conviction of our sinfulness, since this holy man, who had, no doubt, attained unto a great length in mortification, who had 'plucked out many right eyes, and cut off many right hands,' and oftentimes returned victor after war, was so much in groaning under his corruption? O but we have inverted strongly the way to heaven! I conceive, practical Antinomianism is an epidemic error in these days: many think, that it is below a regenerate man to mourn, and to sit down and lament over the body of death. We know not what it is 'to make our bed to swim with tears, and to be bedewing the way to Zion, when our faces are thitherward.' Ye conceive, that it is a lesson to be practised, and learned by those in a lower class, and those who are learned, so to speak, the rudiments of Christianity, and not to be exercised by those who are now advanced unto the high class of Christianity, that being, as it were, in our apprehension, a degrading of yourselves from that pitch of perfection unto which in your imagination you have attained: but, believe me, it is a work not below the eldest Christian, nor above the youngest believer: and the more one be old in reality in religion, this work will always be new in their practice. I shall only give you that divine counsel of a holy man, who desired Christians to set about the mortification of their lusts, as though they had never been taken up in that duty before: each day to set about to mortify, not as a proficient, but as a beginner, who hath never made any progress in that blessed work.

Now, in speaking upon Paul's exercise, which is here holden forth, that he was continually exercised in wrestling against those corruptions, and that body of death that was in him, we need not stand long to prove, that it is the duty of a Christian to be so exercised and taken up; there is somewhat of that implied in that word, Acts xxiv. 16. And it is more clearly pressed, Col. iii. 5. Eph. vi. 13. and 1 Cor. v. 7. And, no doubt, if a Christian did reflect more upon the nature of sin, and consider, that by it deformity with God is increased, and precious conformity with him lost, and did we take up sin in its woful effects, that it worketh death, and involveth us under the curse of a *living God*, we would be more constant in this spiritual warfare. O but Christians, through want of the apprehension of these, are much disenabled to 'stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, and oftentimes entangle themselves again with the yoke of bondage:' so that I conceive, if God were coming to give a name to the Christians of this generation, he might

call us Issachar, because we do now crouch down under two burdens; and are become servants unto tribute; and even those that are more refined and tender in their walk in these days, he might call them Reuben, because they are unstable as water, which marreth their excellency.

But that which *first* we shall speak to is, how the wrestlings of a natural man against the body of death, and those corruptions that are within him, may be distinguished from the wrestling of one that is really godly?

And, *first*, we conceive that it is without debate and controversy, that a man altogether unregenerate, by nature's light may be put on to mortify, if so we may speak, and contradict those sins, which are most sensual and gross, nature's light, including an antipathy and detestation of those things within itself: though we confess, through the depravement of our nature, those sins which fall under the sphere of natural mortification, are now abridged unto a small sum, it being not now refined and clear, as it was when man was in the estate of innocence.

Secondly, Another sort may from some common qualification oppose some sins, as those who are of more heroic and refined spirits, will have a detestation against covetousness, and other sins of that nature, and so in some sense may endeavour the mortification of these things.

Thirdly, The same may a natural man do, by such a conviction of the Holy Ghost, as is but a common work of the Spirit, he may be put on to mortify those sins that are more visible, and somewhat gross in their nature; as is clear from the practice of those who cleanse the outside of the platter, and study to have an outward conformity unto the law of God, notwithstanding of that inward and secret antipathy against the strictness of his law; yea more, a natural man, who hath some predominant evil, may endeavour and will attempt to wrestle against that sin, which is in a direct line of opposition against it; as one that is given to the vice of covetousness, he will study to mortify that vice of prodigality, these being two opposite vices. Now from all these we conclude, that upon every opposition which we use against our corruptions, it is not safe to infer, that we are really engaged in this spiritual warfare; it being, we think another thing than the most part of us do imagine it to be: and we do confess, it is a difficulty even to attain that length of endeavouring mortification, which the natural man, by these things which we have spoken, may attain to. But for the difference betwixt their debates, the first is this, that a natural and unregenerate man doth mainly wrestle against those sins that are outward and more gross, and not so much against those sins that are in-

ward, and fall not under the eye of man. We do not deny, but a natural man may wrestle against vain thoughts, and have some small opposition against the stirring of corruption within his own bosom; but we conceive that there are these two secret sins, which a natural man is not at all taken up in wrestling against, at least very little, viz. his *original corruption* and his *unbelief;* whereas one that is really godly, is much taken up in bearing down these. Paul is here taken up in wrestling against his original sin: and David, Psalm li. 5. compared with verse 2. and 7. is likewise taken up in wrestling against it: and that good man, that is recorded in the gospel, who cried out, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief;' was much taken up in wrestling against his unbelief; and David, Psalm lxxvii. from the beginning to the 10. verse and forward. And certainly, one that was ever taken up in wrestling against these two, at least in some small measure and degree, he may hesitate much whether or not he was ever seriously engaged in this holy warfare. O! but if many, that pass under the notion of professors were posed, when they did enter into the lists with original corruption, there are many who without the breach of truth might say, they never knew what it was to contend against it. And this certainly speaks forth much of our ignorance of original guilt; and believe me, there is more deformity unto the image of God in original sin, than in a thousand actual outbreakings; and it is but in vain for a Christian to attempt the mortification and cutting off of branches, till once he study to pluck up the root, which doth bear *wormwood and gall.*

A *second* difference is this, a natural man wrestleth against his corruptions, rather because they bring him under the stroke of the justice of God, than because they are contrary to the holiness of God. Hence it is, that the most part of a natural man's wrestling is, when he is under affliction; somewhat of which is pointed out, Psalm lxxviii. 34, 35. Now this difference is clear in Joseph and Paul, who made the holiness of God the great topics and common place whence they did produce all their arguments for contradicting sin; as Paul in this chapter, and Joseph in that precious sentence, 'Shall I do this, and sin against God?' But Cain, who was a man cut off from the right hand of the Lord, had another principle of contradicting and wrestling against his lusts, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear,' Gen. iv. 13. And hence it is, that a natural man doth never oppose sin, as it is a cause to interrupt fellowship and communion with God, or from that divine principle of Christ's love constraining him. O but the principle of a natural man wrestling against corruption, be selfish and low! and if there were not a hell, and

a place of torment, natural men would take a latitude to themselves not to mortify sin. But sure it argueth a divine and heroic spirit, and plausible to them, 'who have Christ in them their hope of glory;' that though there were neither any regard or remuneration of their obedience, neither any punishment of their disobedience, yet simple desire to please God, and not to profane his holiness, which he loveth, doth tie them to obedience. I may confidently say, that those who never knew what it was to have that three-fold cord, and that precious triple chain, binding them to obedience, and conducing them to mortify their lusts, viz. the holiness of God, the fear to interrupt communion and fellowship with him, and the love of Christ, they may question whether or not ever they were seriously engaged in this holy warfare? But withal, we do not deny but the fear of punishment is likewise a most divine principle of mortification in its own place; but except there be somewhat higher, it is not to build upon.

The *third* difference is this, that a natural man studieth more to restrain sin, than to mortify it; for he is a man that resteth satisfied with the restraint of the actings of sin, though there be no mortification of that vicious inclination which is in the man; this is clear in Haman, Esth. iii. 5. in Saul, 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17. and following verses, compared with 1 Sam. xxvi. 2. and the Scribes and Pharisees, Matth. xxiii. 25. But the mortification that the heart requireth is of a higher nature, Gal. v. 24. where we are commanded 'to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts;' not only to restrain the acts, but to mortify the habits. We confess, it is a difficulty to determine the difference betwixt the restraint of sin, and mortifying of sin; and this maketh it the more difficult, that sins which are really mortified, sometimes a Christian may be overtaken to commit; which I conceive seldom or never holds of sins that are more gross, but holds ofttimes of sins that are of a lower nature and degree, yet these things may a little point forth the difference: *First*, A Christian who hath sin mortified, is filled with much divine joy and satisfaction in the mortifying of it, which we conceive partly doth proceed from this, that a Christian, when he is honoured to mortify a lust, he ordinarily then receives the intimation of his peace and interest in God in a more lively and spiritual way. And, *secondly*, because, at that time also, he doth receive much precious and sweet communion with God, his soul then is in life; somewhat of this is pointed out to us, Rom. viii. 13. and Rom. vii. 24. compared with verse 25. *Thirdly*, The difference may be known by this, that when a man hath been much in the exercise of fasting and prayer, for the mortifying of such a lust

and idol, and hath not attained to this with great facility, there is great appearance that, upon the desisting of temptation, and the actings of his Spirit to commit such a thing, such a lust is mortified, and not restrained only: there is somewhat of this pointed out, Matth. xvii. 20, 21. where it is said, that the power of casting out of devils, 'goeth not out but by fasting and prayer.' We conceive, the place is principally to be understood concerning the faith of miracles, though by proportion and analogy it may hold of sanctifying faith. O! our lusts in these days do rather go out, than are cast out! They rather die to us, than we to them. *Fourthly*, The frame of spirit which we have after mortifying of a lust, may let us see whether it be a real work, or only some restraint for a time. A man that doth attain such a length as really to mortify and crucify any lust, is much taken up in the exercise of praise, Rom. vii. 25. 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. He is under conviction of his duty to bless the Lord; though he is also convinced of an impossibility of blessing him as he ought to be: but, we think, when lusts are restrained only, and not mortified, the man is not so much taken up in the exercise of praise. O what heavenly elogies and songs of praise have the saints penned unto the unsearchable and omnipotent grace of Christ, when they have been enabled to overcome and crucify a lust! "Their souls have been inditing a good matter concerning the praises of the king, their tongue hath been as the pen of a ready writer." And this may, *lastly*, point out the difference: sins that are mortified, do not, for the most part, presently recur so, as to obtain victory over the Christian; we confess, Satan, to weaken our confidence, may assault us with temptations to commit that iniquity, that so we may be brought to call in question our real and spiritual victory over it: but if lusts be only restrained, it cannot be long away from obtaining victory. This is clear from Esth. iv. 10. compared with the following verses; as likewise from 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17, &c. compared with 1 Sam. xxvi. 2.

The *fourth* difference is, a natural man is not constant in his wrestling against his corruptions, but takes it by fits and starts; either when he is under affliction, or some other sad occurrence that doth befal him, or through some sharp and sudden conviction of a commonly enlightened conscience; but he that is really taken up in this spiritual warfare, hath a constancy in maintaining of it, at least in his endeavours; this is clear from Acts xxiv. 16. and Col. iii. 5. And indeed that woful inconstancy that we have in this spiritual warfare, doth evidence our little real engagement in the work. Are there not many here, who can interrupt the warfare many weeks, and yet not be much under either the discove-

ry of their loss, or under any impression of sorrow because of it? Sure if this were believed, that there may be more lost in one day, than can be gained in many, we would endeavour to be more constant. O but grace is a tender thing, and we ought to keep it 'as the apple of our eye.' Alas! there are but too many, who slacken their endeavour against sin, and will lie idle many days, and yet are ready to think that, when they please, they can shake themselves of their lusts at other times; but to these we shall only say this, beware lest that dispensation once meet you, that when ye shall begin to shake yourselves of your lusts, and of your bands, your strength shall be gone from you, and then your enemies shall lead you captive, and put out your two eyes. O but sometimes our corruptions get such advantages over us, that we may say, *Video meliora proboque deteriora sequor!*

The *Fifth* difference is this, they go not about this warfare from a right principle, which the Christian doth: the one wrestles in their own strength; but the other, resting upon the strength of 'Jehovah, that everlasting strength:' this is pointed at, Rom. viii. 13. There is a command, that a wrestling Christian studies always to obey: a Christian uses much that precious divinity of David, 1 Sam. xvii. 45, 46. when he goes to war. And, alas! there are many that are living under the apprehension of this warfare, who in the day of their accounts, we fear shall be found never really to have entered in the lists 'with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses.' And it is no wonder that many of us be foiled by the hand of our iniquities, we not having sitten down first when we engaged, to consult, whether we, with our ten thousand, were able to meet him that came against us with his twenty thousand. We engaged without the apprehension of difficulty, and so no wonder we be overcome without much difficulty. Now examine yourselves by these, whether indeed you be engaged in this spiritual warfare.

Now that which, *2dly*, we shall speak to, shall be, to those advantages that a Christian may have, by being continually taken up in the spiritual warfare.

The *First* advantage is this, it is an excellent way to obtain victory over those lusts and idols wherewith we are beset. We conceive, it is no wonder that this be the great and general complaint of Christians in these days, that they are led captive by the hand of their iniquities, and that the voice and noise of the spoiler is so much heard with them, because they are not taken up in a constant debating and contending with sin; there is somewhat of this pointed out to us, Rev. iii. 5. where, though that promise be principally understood of the reward of an overcomer, when he shall be above, that 'he shall be clothed in white;' yet

we think it may include this, that a man that is in the way, and constant exercise of overcoming, shall attain to much divine conformity with God, and much divine deformity with the world; and to those who are much discouraged with their little success, and apparent victory in this war, notwithstanding of their constancy in debate with their lusts, we shall only speak that for their comfort by way of allusion, which is in Dan. vii. 12. 'Their dominion shall be taken from them, but their lives be prolonged for a season and a time.' The dominion of your lusts shall be taken away, though their lives may be prolonged for your exercise and dependence on him for a short time and season: ye may have tribulation in this spiritual warfare ten days; but be convinced of this, that the day is coming, when ye shall sit down upon a throne, after ye have overcome, as Christ also did sit down, after he had overcome. Once ye shall stand and defend the field, when all your lusts shall flee as chaff before the wind. Albeit oftentimes our discouragement speak that word which Saul spake to David, 1 Sam. xvii. 33. (when we are to wrestle with the devil) 'Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth:' yet a Christian ought to answer, 'through God I shall do valiantly.'

Secondly, It is the way to attain much divine consolation, as is clear, Rev. ii. 27. 'To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden manna;' which is, as we conceive, in part, he shall have of the consolations of the Holy Ghost, though it be principally understood of Jesus Christ. O what divine contentment and unspeakable solace of mind doth a Christian attain by entertaining constant enmity against his lusts! I am persuaded that which doth interrupt a Christian's peace much, is the interruption of that holy and divine enmity which we ought to have against sin: believe me, there is more real satisfaction to be found in one day's serious debate against sin, than in having an eternity of enjoyment of the most flourishing pleasures in the world. Ye 'may sow in tears,' in this warfare, but 'ye shall only reap in joy.' The first part may be true of the men of the world, in their pursuits after their pleasures, they do sow in tears; but it was never yet heard nor left upon record, that they did reap in joy; there was always a correspondence betwixt their seed-time and their harvest; but there is a divine transmutation and disproportion betwixt the seed-time of a Christian and his harvest; unspeakable joy can spring of the root of their most bitter sorrows.

Thirdly, It is an excellent way to maintain the faith of our interest in God. This is clear from Rev. ii. 17. where Christ giveth this promise to the overcomers, that he will give them a

new name,' which holdeth forth their adoption and interest in him, 'which no man can know, but he that receiveth it: and certainly there is nothing that overclouds a Christian's hope so much, nor darkeneth his interest, as an intermission in this holy warfare. Yea, more particularly, he attaineth to the most certain persuasion of his victory over his corruptions. There is somewhat of this pointed out, 2 Tim iv. 7, 8. 'I have fought the good fight of faith.' And hence he doth infer, that there is laid 'up for him a crown of righteousness: which doth certainly import and conclude in its bosom, that Paul, upon his constant endeavour to wrestle against corruption, did attain to much certainty of overcoming. I think it altogether impossible for a Christian, intermitting this holy warfare, to entertain any divine or assured persuasion that there is a blessed issue and period unto his warfare. And we think it is from this, that oftentimes his own cry out, 'Who can stand before the children of Anak?' And do conclude to make themselves a captain, and go back unto Egypt: though we think, that if we were constant in this, we would be taught, not only to entertain a holy undervaluing of them, but likewise a divine certainty of overcoming. I think a Christian hath not only that advantage by being constant in this warfare, that he is brought to an assured persuasion that he shall overcome, but likewise doth most sweetly conclude, that the strength of their corruption is gone, therefore they may go up and war with them.

Fourthly, By maintaining this warfare, a Christian gets much experience; by it he attains to much distinct apprehension of the deceitfulness of him, who is 'the deceiver of the brethren.' We are persuaded, that those who are constant in this warfare can speak most to those singular subtilties of Satan, and can most distinctly fathom these deep devices of his; as likewise they can most take up the unsearchable deceitfulness of their own heart: and there is, no doubt, no small advantage in the taking up of these two, both that we may be provoked unto self-diffidence; as likewise, to have our confidence and hope much reposed upon Jesus Christ, who is 'the captain of our salvation,' that we may be constrained in that day, when the blast of the terrible one is as a blast against the wall, and when the archer doth shoot at us, and grievously wound us, to go unto him, whose name is 'an everlasting strength, so that by his strength we may be enabled to overcome.

That which, *thirdly*, we shall speak to, shall be, what is the reason Christians do obtain so small victory in this spiritual warfare? And in this, we shall not only speak to these moral and culpable causes why Christians do not obtain much victory, but

we shall likewise speak a little to those divine and precious ends that God hath in denying victory to his own, who in some small measure are entertaining a constant enmity against their corruption. And as for the *first*, it doth proceed from too much self-conceit and presumptuous opinion of their own strength. I am persuaded, that that which made Peter so uncapable to resist the temptations of dying Christ, did much proceed from that word, which is in Matth. xxvi. 33. 'Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.' Therefore we think that the first and most excellent way to obtain victory, is to be dwelling under the apprehensions of our own weakness to overcome; that holy and divine paradox being always made true, that 'when we are weak, then we are strong:' and we may enter the lists with our corruptions, having no confidence in the flesh, but desiring, in the name of the 'God Israel,' to wrestle with the strongest Goliah that we meet with. O but humility is a most sweet and strong armour, wherewith a Christian ought to be clothed, when he goeth to war! he must walk in that holy fear, which may be consistent with faith, and entertain so much faith, and spiritual confidence, as may not altogether cut off holy fear.

There is a *second* cause, which is, too much entanglement with the pleasures and affairs of the world: it is impossible for one, who is taken up in the continual noise and buz of things here below, to be an overcomer. Hence Paul presseth, 2 Tim. ii. 4. 'That no man that warreth ought to entangle himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him, who hath chosen him to be a soldier:' and that word, 1 Cor. ix. 25. 'He that striveth for the mastery must be temperate in all things:' Oh! oftentimes through the deceitfulness of the world, and pleasures thereof, we are led captive by the hand of our iniquities, and do fall before our enemies. I know nothing so suitable and helpful for a Christian to overcome, than to be denied to these three cardinal and fundamental temptations, by which Satan standeth to allure us, which are 'the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life:' that our eyes may not take in any sweet or pleasant representations of the transient vanities of the world; neither may our sensual appetite be taken with the taste of those bitter and most sour delights; neither may be ambitious in the enjoyments and actual possession of them.

There is a *third* cause, which is, that we are not taken up in the exercise of watchfulness; this is certain, that the exercise of this grace hath most divine influence for the overcoming of our corruptions; as is clear from Matth. xxvi. 41. and Mark xiv. 38. That ought to be the great motto of a Christian soldier, which ought to be engraven upon his arms, *watch*. Watchfulness is

not only effectual for overcoming in this respect, that it doth discover unto us our temptations, when they begin to assault us, but likewise it takes up both the subtility and strength of our temptations, as likewise it taketh up the weakness and inability in the Christian to resist that temptation; and if these three be attained, seldom or never is a Christian soiled by the hand of his iniquities; therefore that which I would say to the Christian soldier, I would say unto all, watch.

There is a *fourth* cause, which is, that we are not much taken up in the exercise of secret prayer. Prayer being indeed that noble and spiritual weapon, by which Christians do overcome, as is clear from Matth. xxvi. 41. and 2 Cor. xii. 7. where Paul, when 'a messenger of Satan buffeted him,' was constrained to beseech the Lord thrice:' a practice much unknown by the most of Christians, who know not what it is to pray without ceasing, when they are tempted without interruption. I think, of all the weapons that almost a Christian taketh to resist temptation, this is most effectual: for when Satan seeth that a Christian improves the temptation so much for his own advantage as to make it an errand to go to God, then he desists and gives over to contend. I confess, a Christian may in so far glory in his infirmities, as they give him an occasion to converse more frequently with God. O! but had we spent more of our time in conversing with God, when we were alone, we might have attained many sweet trophies and fruits of our victory, which now we have only in hope and expectation.

There is a *fifth* cause, which is, that we are not much taken up in the exercise of faith, which is that general piece of armour that Paul doth prescribe unto the Christian, Eph. vi. 16. 'Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.' There is that sweet note of commendation put upon this armour, that there is no temptation a Christian can meet with, but through the exercise of faith, he may be able to overcome it: hence Paul saith, 'Ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil.' This piece of armour is not only defensive, but we may say, in some measure, it is offensive likewise. Now faith helps a Christian to overcome his temptations and corruptions wherewith he is assaulted, not only by laying hold on the infinite strength of him who is the Captain of salvation! but likewise faith is that grace, which hath the most subtile and divine eye in taking up the strength of corruption. O but a man much in the exercise of faith, is a man that can pass a most accurate sentence upon his lusts and idols wherewith he doth rencounter! There is nothing impossible to the believing man. And, I think, if there be any grace by which

a Christian doth ascend most to a divine similitude unto the omnipotency of God, it is by the grace of faith; hereby is the Christian's power most intended. O but faith will make those that are weak, strong! Therefore we would desire you to be exercising your confidence upon him, who is that munition of rocks; so that through him ye may overcome, as likewise through the word of your testimony.

This, *lastly*, may be a cause, that after some small victory over our lusts, we are ordinarily entangled with security, not knowing what it is to make the victory over one lust a sweet provocation to the overcoming of another. I think (if we may allude unto that word, which is in Psalm xviii. 37.) it ought much to be the practice of a Christian, 'to pursue his enemies till he overtake them, and never to return again till they be consumed:' that by the strength of him who is Jehovah, we may run through a troop, and by our God 'we may leap over a wall.' O! but constant exercise in this war, never proclaiming a cessation of arms, would make a speedy riddance of all adversaries; 'He then should teach our hands to war, and by our arms a bow of steel might be broken. I think, that which made David so little successful over his lusts after some small victory, was his security; as likewise in Peter. There is no discharge in this war till death, and then we shall receive our everlasting arrears for all our toil.

Now to the *second*, those divine ends that the Lord hath in this, why Christians do not attain victory over their lusts, though in some small measure endeavouring constancy in war; it doth either proceed from this, that God knows that we can better improve a wrestling estate, than an overcoming estate; while we are here below, we can better dispense with war, than we can with victory. Therefore, while we are travelling through this wilderness, he doth still keep us in exercise with serpents and scorpions: Or it doth much proceed from this, that we may be kept in a constant dependance upon God, and may entertain a holy and constant correspondence with him: it is certain, that if we were not constrained to walk with God, through a principle of necessity, we would seldom walk with him through a principle of duty, or from a principle of love; for it is obvious to a Christian upon his secret search, that we walk most with God when we stand most in need of him. It doth likewise proceed from this, that we may be kept humble while we are here below, and that we may not be exalted above measure: as also, that the grace and power of our blessed Lord Jesus, in helping us to overcome, may be rendered more conspicuous and evident; this being the great stage in which Christ's power doth

most eminently act and appear over our weakness, and the apprehensions of these insuperable difficulties, wherewith we are beset, and oft overcome.

Now, to shut up our discourse, we shall desire that once ye may give up your names unto Jesus Christ, to fight under his royal banner; and believe me, though your corruptions were never so strong, yet at last he shall overcome them. The certainty whereof is made out unto you by this, 'That our blessed Head hath led captivity captive, and now is exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high:' and the hope and expectation of that blessed issue, may make you rejoice, 'with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

SERMON II.

GAL. v. 24. *And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

O! When shall that great and excellent wonder be seen in heaven which John did see, Rev. xxii. 1, 6. to behold the invisible church, and those that are expectants of heaven, which is that woman clothed and adorned with that spotless and beautiful righteousness of a crucified Saviour, which is pointed out by her being clothed with the sun, and to be regulated by the doctrine of the twelve apostles, which are indeed those precious stars that will bring us unto the place where Christ lies, and will sweetly conduct us unto him; and withal, to have that great idol under our feet, the world, the divine emblem of which is the moon, because it is subject to many vicissitudes and changes, and hath most different and contrary aspects? Though we conceive, that if many Christians were to be painted, we might fix the moon upon their head, for they use not the world as their servant, but as their master: mortification is an exercise that doth not suit with flesh and blood; it is a hard saying to a man settled upon the dregs of nature, and yet incorporate in that old stock. O! but it is a sad divinity to many, 'that except one die with Christ, they cannot reign with him,' he must win to the fellowship of his sufferings, and be conformable unto his death, before we attain to the resurrection from the dead, we love to divide those things that God hath conjoined, to take Christ for righteousness and salvation, but not for a king, and for sanctification. And if it was an evidence unto wise Solomon, that she was not the mother of the child, who pleaded for the dividing of it; so it may be supposed, that he who will not take a whole Christ, but would have him divided, is not one that is predesti-

nated unto the adoption of children. We confess, there are many that love Christ's coat rather than his graces; and if they pursue after those, it is more after those graces that are adorning than saving. And we conceive, that there are these three graces that a hypocrite doth most pursue after, there is the grace of prayer, and the grace of knowledge, and the grace of humility; and of the last we may say, a hypocrite may endeavour to personate it, but there is always within his bosom some convictions of his little attainment; it is impossible for a hypocrite to think himself nothing. And O that we could once attain to that precious length of Christianity, as to be entertaining a holy oblivion of our attainments, and a sanctified memory of our imperfections, that the former may be written, as it were, in the sand, and the latter might be engraven in the fleshly tables of our hearts, and kept constantly upon record. We confess, there is not much of our leaf that withers in these days, but much of our fruit withers and decays. O! is not man become so brutish and ignorant, that he may be sent unto the beasts of the field to be instructed of that which is his duty? Solomon makes mention of four beasts upon the earth, which are little and exceeding wise, Prov. xxx. 24, 25, 26, 27, all which may teach us some spiritual doctrine: *First*, There are the ants, who may teach us that grace of divine providence, and Christian policy, in laying hold on our occasions and opportunities, who, though they be not strong people, yet provide their meat in summer: and, no doubt, we should be fighting with our spiritual enemies, while it is the day, for the night cometh wherein no man can fight: actions done in season add a great deal of lustre and perfection to them, every thing being beautiful in its season. *Secondly*, There are the conies, who may teach us that grace of denial, to distrust our own strength in the day of straits, to run unto him who is that 'munition of rocks, when the blast of the terrible One is as a storm against the wall; for they being a feeble people, 'make their houses in the rocks:' and, no doubt, atheism and idolatry are the two great impediments of mortification, too much confidence in ourselves, which is idolatry, and too much diffidence in God, which is our atheism; moreover, we may go to the locusts, which would teach us that primitive grace of unity, who, though they want a king, 'yet go they forth in bands.' And, *lastly*, we may go to the spider, which may teach us that grace of spiritual-mindedness, and of aspiring after those sublime and excellent things of God, for they are in kings' palaces. And O! to be more conversant with heaven, and those things that are above: this would make us to distaste these lower springs, and they would be to us as the waters of Marah.

But to come more particularly to the words, you have many precious things concerning mortification holden forth, which is that precious and cardinal grace, of which we intend at this time to speak; you have the infinite advantage of this grace held forth, viz. that such do meet with divine intimation of their interest in Christ, and that they are Christ's, which is indeed the high elevation of a Christian; and this is clear from the words, that such an one may from this gather, that his name was written in the ancient and precious records of heaven. And, no doubt, little divine wrestling with our corruptions, makes us to have the extract of our peace so often withdrawn to our sense; there is this held forth concerning it, the extensive nature of mortification, that a Christian ought not only to mortify the flesh, which is original sin, which is so called, not only because of that woful note of amity and affection that is betwixt us and our lusts; hence that word, 'no man ever hated his own flesh.' O! those invisible knots of union that are betwixt us and our lusts; but it is so called, because sin hath contaminated the whole man, so that, 'from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot,' there is nothing that is not defiled; as likewise, because, during our abode in these tents of mortality, we must have this woful and sad companion, and there is an unchangeable and unalterable decree of heaven, that during our time of minority, we should have that bad associate; but more, a Christian should mortify his affections, which are his predominant lusts, to which our affections are so much joined, and our soul doth so much go out after; as also his lusts, which are the first motions and risings of corruption within one, and withal, may comprehend the eschewing the first shadows and appearances of evil, Prov. iv. 14, 15. 'Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men, avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.' Our mortification should be as much of our invisible idols, as our visible idols.

There is this likewise held forth, the difficulty and painfulness of this work, under this notion of *crucifying*, which was one of the most painful deaths. We conceive, that there are many who are of that man's humour, who, wallowing upon the grass, cried out, *Utinam hoc esset laborare*. There is, no doubt, more difficulty in this than we apprehend; we must not lie in the bed of ease, if we intend to be mortifying Christians, we must wrestle as princes with God, till we prevail. The longsomeness of this work is also pointed at, under the notion of *crucifying*, it being a longsome death. We cannot ordinarily fight and triumph in one day; that ambitious letter of Cæsar's will not hold here, *Veni, vidi, vici*: we must die mortifying

and struggling with our corruptions, and when one of our feet is within the borders of eternity, to be sighing out that lamentation, 'O wretched man that I am,' &c. You have also the intensive nature of mortification, that a Christian should be content with nothing but the death of his lusts, which is held forth in that word, *crucify*. O to bind ourselves with a holy oath and vow, not to dwell in much contentment, till we have gotten the life of our predominant lust; we must not give our idol quarter, upon the most plausible and fairest terms of subjection, otherwise, if ye do, I shall not say that word which the prophet spake to Ahab, that your life shall go for his; but sure I am, that confederacy shall be broken, and likely not without many sorrows to your spirits. There is this, *lastly*, the certainty of this victory, held forth in that word, 'they have crucified;' it is here in the preterite time, as it were already accomplished and brought to pass; and, no doubt, this may make us to rejoice, 'with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,' once we shall have a triumphant song put in our mouth.

Now, before we shall speak unto any of these, we shall speak to some few things as previous to be known; we shall not dwell long in pointing out the nature of mortification; we conceive it is this, it is a divine quality of the immortal soul, derived from the efficacy and virtue of Christ's death, whereby the strength of sin is impaired, and its dominion taken away, so that we should not totally, nor with full consent, yield ourselves unto that iron-yoke of our iniquity; neither shall we stand long to prove, that it is your duty to be much in the practice of this duty; it is clear, not only from Col. iii. 5. 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth,' &c. but also from 1 Pet. ii. 15. 16. and 2 Cor. vii. 1. It ought to be our great design and aim, to bring all those things in subjection, which stand in opposition to Jesus Christ, and it is the noble prerogative of those young men, 1 John ii. 13, 14. that they have overcome that wicked one, and hath in some measure trodden Satan under their feet.

But we shall speak a little unto this, *First*, whether or not a Christian can fall again to the committing of that sin, which once they have mortified, and repented for, and withal, hath received an act of pardon? We conceive, indeed, so far as we know, there can be no explicate proof given of such a case in scripture, that ever any of those that were heirs of the grace of life did fall into that sin which they had once mortified, and repented for; but, however, we are confident to aver, that it is not inconsistent with a gracious estate; which we conceive is clear, not only from his names, but from his promises, and from his commands; doth not that name, that he is 'a healer of our backslid-

ings, and a repairer of our breaches?' And that name, 'He will multiply to pardon,' speak out that of a saint's relapsing into a mortified sin, doth not put him without hope, Isa. lv. 7. Hos. xiv. 4. but that he may have confidence that he shall not die but live, and declare the wondrous works of the Lord, though God may speak that word to him, which Absalom spake to Hushai, 'Is this thy kindness to thy friend?' And withal, do not his promises speak this. Jer. iii. 22 'I will heal your back-slidings?' And do not his commands speak it, Jer. iii. 1. 12, 14. 22 how often is back-sliding Israel exhorted to return?' And he who imposed that commandment upon us, to forgive our brother until seventy and seven times, if he return and repent, will not his bowels be moved within him towards a back-sliding heifer? But withal, to provoke you to beware of that sin, to sin after repentance and mortification, we shall propose these things: *First*, Such a sin doth create and beget much hardness and stupidity of heart, so that 'our own back-slidings do reprove us,' and become not only our sin, but our punishment: and when 'God hath spoken peace to us, should we again turn to folly?' *Secondly*, There is this to dissuade you, that such apostacy as this, makes a Christian to lose the sense and comfortable assurance of their interest, so that sometimes they will be even razing, as it were, the foundations. O but back-sliders in heart are filled with the fruit of their own way, and are made to walk in 'darkness, and have no light.' It is much for a Christian to keep fast his hands, when after this manner he hath lost his feet.

Fourthly, Such an one doth not ordinarily give much reins and much liberty to his corruptions; that is indeed their year of jubilee and release; as is clear from Jer. v. 6 where these two are joined: and may not the nature and aggravating circumstances of that sin make you to eschew it? Is it not a sinning against light? Is it not a sinning against God, after he hath appeared unto you twice? So that this may be the manner of your bemoaning yourself. If it had been an enemy that had thus done, O Lord, thou mightest have borne it, but that it should be one, whom thou didst condescend to make thy familiar, and to take sweet counsel together with him, that hath lift his heel against thee, this, no doubt, is an iniquity of a deep dye: and we shall only say this, that it is imprinted upon the effigy of godly Judah, Gen. xxxviii. 26 that after his first fall with Tamar, he 'knew her again no more.' And no doubt it were your advantage to obey that counsel, 'Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.'

Now that which, *secondly*, we would speak to, is, to propose some things to you, by which you may know your growth in mortification, since there are many that delude themselves in

this, supposing that their lusts are really mortified, when they are but sleeping, and that they are really cast out, when they only go out for a season: those are they 'that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not cleansed from their iniquity. And before we shall speak any thing to this, we would have you considering these things, *first*, that there may be a growth of leaves where there is not much growth of fruit, a plentiful measure of profession, and yet much barrenness in practice: there are some whose leaf doth not wither, though their fruit doth much decay, who have many specious appearances, and yet cannot say that the root of the matter is with them: and withal, we would say, that there may be much real growth to the fruit, when there is not much in the root, so that, though we spread forth our branches, yet we do not cast forth our root as Lebanon. We grow sometimes more in prayer, and knowledge, and joy in the Holy Ghost, than in mortification and humility, though there be a promise for both their growths, Hosea xiv. 5, 6. Now there is in this, *secondly*, that we would have you knowing, that there is a divine necessity for Christians to grow somewhat in all the graces of the Spirit, 'and to bring forth fruit even in old age;' to be advancing in mortification, to be ascending up in a divine conformity with God, till we shall be made like unto him. We confess, indeed, there were some sad interruption, when we almost forget that we are purged from our old sins; and this necessity of growth, appears not only from this, that Christ is the head of believers, and they his members; this similitude the apostle useth twice to express a Christian's growth, Eph. iv. 15, 16. Col. ii. 10. And, no doubt, since Christ is the head, and we the members, we must grow till there be a divine conformity and resemblance betwixt us and our head, and are not we predestinated unto this divine and noble end? Rom. v. 29. And must not we purify ourselves, and endeavour to wash ourselves from our spots, through that precious blood of sprinkling, that 'we may be holy, as he who hath called us is holy?' And more, this is one end of that fulness, which was communicated unto 'Jesus Christ our precious head, ever to make us complete, Col. ii. 9, 10. And as his fulness is for our growth, so our growth is for the making up of his fulness, Eph. i. 23. Mystical Christ will not be complete, till once all his members grow up 'to the stature of the fulness of Jesus Christ;' and so from that, there is such an invisible knot of union, and supernatural relation betwixt us and Christ, that a Christian must grow; and if once the first draughts and imperfect lineaments of Christ's image be engraven on our soul, he will bring it into perfection: since this is his noble prerogative, that his work is perfect. There is this also

that speaks a necessity of a Christian's growth in mortification, and all the graces of the Spirit, that the faithfulness of all the persons of the blessed Trinity is engaged for this, and is laid in pawn: it is clear, that the faithfulness of the first Person of the blessed Trinity is laid in pledge, from Psalm xcii. 14, 15. 'They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to shew that the Lord is upright and faithful.' Which, we conceive, doth relate to that promise made by the Father to the Son, in that ancient and eternal transaction, Isa. liii. 10. And is not the faithfulness of the Son laid in pledge? Is not this commandment of the Father laid upon him, 'That of all that are given to him, he should lose none, but should raise them up at the last day? John vi. 39, 40. So that as Christ must be answerable to his charge, he must present all the gifted ones unto the Father, which presupposeth their growth in grace, and their being 'made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.' And is not the faithfulness of the third Person of the blessed Trinity likewise engaged in this, in that it is his great work to apply Christ's purchase, to reveal unto us the whole mind of God, and to communicate all things that are needful for us to know, and to guide us in all truth? John xvi. 13. And if this be his first work, will he not accomplish it, and bring it unto perfection? All which great works that are committed unto the Holy Ghost to do, have that sweet and precious result, 'growth in grace.' There is this, *thirdly*, that we would have you knowing, that there are some graces of the Spirit, of whose growth, before we can judge, there must be a time allotted; grace is not like the grass of the field, which groweth in a night, and perisheth in a night. It is a woful practice amongst many, they begin to search their growth, before they have well begun to grow: we would rather counsel you to grow, than to search your growth; though it is indeed a Christian's duty to take notice, 'to go up early to the vineyards, to see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranate bud forth;' this is clear from Song vii. 12. and from Psalm lxiii. 8. where David taketh notice, not only of his following after God, but that his soul did follow hard after him. But if in this we may allude, we shall say this unto you, 'Judge nothing before the time; let your graces grow, before you judge of their growth. And there is this, *lastly*, that we would say, that growing in grace, and the fruits of the Spirit, is a mystery that is more taken up by faith than by sense: we must grow by faith, and by faith we will best discern, especially under desertion, and when we are walking under a cloud, and Christ carves out bitter things unto us. We confess, indeed, when we are dandled upon his knee, and our cup of divine consolations is running

over, and he covereth a table to us in the wilderness, then our growth may be known by sense.

But as to the question we proposed, we shall give you these evidences of your growth in mortification; there is this, *first*, those are admitted to read their names in those ancient and precious records of heaven, and to know that they were engraven upon his heart before ever the corner-stone of the world was laid. This is clear from Rev. ii. 17. and 2 Tim. iv. 8. And the ground of it is this, that those who are wrestling as princes with their lusts, and enduring the heat of the day, he lets them see a sight of the crown, and of that eternal felicity, that so they may endure that good fight of faith, and persevere to the end, that they may obtain that crown of life.

And there is this ground of it also, because such are much in the exercise of those two cardinal and architectonic graces of the Spirit, faith and prayer, by which much divine familiarity and fellowship with God is attained, and so faith doth increase with increase of God.

There is this *second* evidence, when your lusts have not such power to disturb us in holy duties, as in prayer, hearing, and meditating: if you have dispossessed those unclean things, and can go about those duties with a great deal of more divine serenity and composedness of spirit; but if this be wanting, it is an evidence of no great growth in mortification; as is clear from Jer. xxiii. 11. and Ezek. xxxiii. 31. And we conceive, that this is an evidence of growth in mortification upon these two grounds: 1. A Christian that is much a victor in this blessed warfare, is oftentimes under the dreadful impressions of the majesty and holiness of God, by which those sinful stirrings and motions of his heart are much abated, by reason of his terror, he cannot endure himself to be, 'with the fool, in the ends of the earth,' because such a one hath power over his spirit, and rules over it, so that he is not like a city broken down and without walls. O but it is much for one to subject all his thoughts to the obedience of Jesus Christ, to have nothing within him that lifts up the heel against the knowledge and excellency of Jesus Christ! And, by the way, it is a woful and irrational evil, that we lodge Christ in our face, and in our mouth we speak of him, and seem to love him, but we lodge idols in our heart, that glorious and excellent mansion, which should be kept for that excellent guest, that 'immortal King of glory, who is the light of the higher house.

There is this *third* evidence of growth, to be much in exalting and magnifying of Jesus Christ, and lifting up of that burdensome tone of his praise; this was an evidence of Paul's growth in mortification, Rom. vii. 35. 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57, 58. O but

one that hath really tasted of that noble thing, mortifying and pardoning grace, their soul will esteem Christ matchless, and a divine necessity of speaking out his praise, and setting him on high will lie upon them. There are two special times when Christians are put to a divine *non-plus* in speaking out of his praise, and are constrained to cry out that word, Psalm lxv. 1. 'Praise waits for thee:' or silent, that is, it cannot be expressed. There is that time when a Christian is caught up, as it were, unto the third heaven, and hath some eminent discoveries of God, then they are constrained to cry out, 'Exalt thyself, O Lord:' their thoughts are so high of him, that there can be no expressions found suitable unto his worth. And we confess, indeed, it is hard, if not impossible, to commit any hyperbole in commending of him. And there is that *Second* time, when Christians are able to turn the battle to the gate, and in some measure are enabled to conquer their spiritual enemies; then are they put to this, 'Who can exalt him, who is, by infinite degrees, exalted above our blessing and praise?' Sometimes a Christian is put to that spiritual posture and heavenly frame, that he cannot make language of his thoughts of Christ, that though his heart could endite a good matter concerning the king, yet his tongue cannot be the pen of a ready writer.

There is a *fourth* evidence of a Christian's growth, when a Christian hath more spiritual discoveries, and insight into his corruptions, and is more wrestling against them: and we would have you considering these two things: 1*st*, That discovery of bosom and invisible lusts, is that which we mainly take to be meant in this evidence, and wrestling against them. And there is this, 2*dly*, that all our victories over our lusts, should increase our antipathy against sin, and make us to be zealous, till we once shall obtain a complete victory, and shall have accomplished our warfare.

There is a *fifth* evidence of our growth, when the remembrance of our former lusts and idols do not provoke desires after the enjoyment of those things again, but rather doth provoke the exercise of sorrows, that ever that should have been our lot, to have been under the dominion of such lusts and idols. O but there are many, to whom remembrance of their lusts will provoke their affections, Ezek. xxiii. 19, 21. And this speaks much strength of love, that the picture of his idols should so much inflame him, and gain his affections: O! but looking upon our old sins with an affectionate eye, speaks little growth in mortification.

There is that *last* evidence of our growth, our high and majestic thoughts of Christ and his word: for if once our humour

be purged out, we shall then, 'as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word.' And I am persuaded, that as one doth obtain success in this precious warfare, he doth ascend in his spiritual conception of Christ: such an one is endeavouring that evangelic and heavenly captivity of affections, to have them all confined unto Jesus Christ, that precious and excellent Object. O! but one sight of Jesus Christ, in his matchless and transcendent comeliness, to behold that divine contemperature, harmony, and conjunction of all spiritual graces that are in him, would it not provoke us to cast away our idols 'to the moles and to the bats,' and should they not lose their beautiful hue and image? O, but eternity to contemplate that infinite majesty that is in him, sweetly contemperate with his loveliness! so that we may say, there is both majestic lowliness, and lowly majesty in him; to see likewise his infinite highness, and his matchless condescendency; to see his absolute sovereignty, and his unparalleled humility; those things, if once they were attained, might make us to cry out, Who would not love thee, O King of nations?

Now that which we shall *lastly* speak to, shall be this, to shew unto you those things that speak and prove our soul union, and heart conjunction with our idols, that so we may be provoked to the mortification of them. There is this, 1*st*, that we embrace our idols after frequent convictions of the disadvantage of them; that after they have been seen in their own native colours, yet we dandle them upon our knee, like that word, Isa. lvii. 10. and that, Jer. l. 38. 'They are mad upon their idols:' demented in their pursuits after them. And, no doubt, this speaks of a most unmortified frame, and one filled with the love of his idols. There is this, 2*dly*, that speaks our embracing of our idols, upon small temptations, like that, 2 Sam. xii. 2. 3. There are some temptations of our lusts to gain our affections, and some to gain our judgment, and to sin without the proposal of some great advantage, or some solacing delight or pleasure, speaks us most strongly united to our lusts. There is this, 3*dly*, that speaks that infinite toil and labour that we expose ourselves to, to satisfy our lusts; you will see it in Ecclesiastes ii. where Solomon, making pleasure and carnal joy his idol, is put to much toil to satisfy it. And believe it, it is more easy to mortify your lusts, than to satisfy them, for that is impossible work. Our idols have two daughters that still cry, Give give: our idols are like the grave, the barren womb, the earth that is filled with water, and the fire, who never say, 'It is enough.' Our idols have two attendants, impatience and diligence. We will weary ourselves in the fire, to obtain satisfaction on our lusts; and if we do not attain it, we will curse our King,

and look upward. There is this, *4thly*, that speaks our soul-union to our idols, and it is embracing of them after application of threatenings against those who should embrace that sin; and to commit this sin with lifted up hands, is indeed to sport with the justice of God, or rather to put a bill of defiance in his hand, supposing that we are above the reach of his justice and power. And there is this, *5thly*, that speaks out our killing of convictions, which tend to the discovery of the sinfulness of sin, and pressing upon us those duties by which we attain to the mortification of them: and is it not certain, then, that we kill our convictions in the birth, and make them prove abortive? Love to our idols is that which kills our convictions, and our killing of our convictions, is the mother of our love to our idols. And there is this, *lastly*, that speaks out soul-union with our idols, those anxious sorrows when we miss the enjoyment of our idols, we are then ready to cry out, 'It is better for us to die, than to live.' And oftentimes, when our idols are taken from us, and are laid in the grave, our living lusts sit down and lament over the grave of our buried idols, crying out, Ah, my lord! And since there are such invisible and woful knots of union betwixt us and our idols, we should endeavour to have all these knots loosed, and to have our souls united to him by these two precious and golden chains of faith and love, and to have our hearts a Bethel, a house for God, and a temple for the Holy Ghost, and not a Bethaven, an house of idols, and a cage for all unclean birds, that our spirits may be mansions for that eternal Spirit, and he may have an arbitrary power over us, and a negative voice in conducting us to heaven.

SERMON III.

GAL. v. 24. *And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

MORTIFICATION is that precious duty imposed upon man, not only by the law of nature, but by the royal and excellent law of grace. Doth not the law and light of nature instruct man thus, 'It is better to kill than be killed?' And certainly, except a Christian be the ruin of his iniquities, iniquity shall certainly be his ruin: we shall either sing a song of triumph over our lusts, or our lusts shall sing a song of triumph over us. And doth not that royal law of liberty and grace enforce this upon us, while it desireth, that 'we should crucify our members which are upon the earth,' and be aspiring after a divine conformity with the image of the invisible God? Though we

conceive there be some, that if they would retire themselves a little, to behold those subtile and visible actings of the mystery of iniquity within them, and those deep devices of Satan, and how many strange lords beside Jesus Christ exercise dominion over them, they might be constrained to put in their Amen unto that truth, That 'it is more easy for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for such unmortified Christians,' as many of us are, 'to enter into the kingdom of God.' It is better for us to dwell in the house of mourning, than in the house of mirth: we may say much of the carnal joy that is amongst us, 'Such laughter is mad, and such mirth what doth it?' We may wish for some retired cottage in the wilderness, where we may go aside, and spend our seventy years in the bitterness of our soul, and account it marvellous loving kindness if we shall obtain hope in our end. It is, without all debate, that the general and universal evil of our days is, that Christians are so little in the exercise of this precious grace of mortification: we think we take a greater latitude in our way to heaven, than that cloud of witnesses which went before us did adventure to take. And it is certain, that if one from the dead were admitted to write commentaries upon the disadvantages of satisfying the lusts of the flesh, they would point out marvellous hurt, and infinite loss in exercising any of those. As likewise, if any from above were admitted to write upon the advantages 'of crucifying of the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof,' what precious commendation might they give to those that are exercised in those low, but exalting works of mortification? Believe me, this is most certain, that it is easier to mortify your lusts, than to satisfy them: for we conceive, that such an one, who is spending his precious time in the satisfying of his lusts, doth spend his time betwixt these three: *1st* The impatiency of his lusts, which still cry out, Give, give. *2dly*, The impotency and weakness of the means he hath to satisfy such lusts. And, *3dly*, the conviction of the impossibility of satisfying the insatiable desires and infinite lusts of sin. Anxiety and sorrow are the constant attendants of a man that is not studying to crucify his lusts and affections: and certainly, if we may allude to that word, Jer. xlviii. 10. 'Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood,' he is cursed that doth not endeavour to crucify and bring low the 'seven abominations of his heart,' that we may, with Naphtali and Zebulun, jeopard our lives unto death in the highest places of the field, and that there might be none of our lusts to cry out within us, 'The bitterness of death is past,' but may endeavour to cut them in pieces before the Lord. We conceive this work of mortification is the most pleasant exercise of a Christian,

if not in its own nature, yet in its fruits and effects.

Now, before we shall speak any thing unto those things which we proposed to speak of at the last occasion, we shall speak a little to this, what is the reason that Christians' resolutions and purposes to quit such a predominant lust, and to forsake such an idol, do oft-times evanish without any fruit? All these cords of divine resolution by which they bind themselves, are but as tow and flax before the fire of temptation, they decreeing many things which are not established; and we confess, this is so incident an evil to his own, that sometimes they are resolved in nothing so much as this, to resolve no more; they, in a manner, give over the duty of resolution, because they are shortcoming in the duty of performance; and we conceive, that this is occasioned either through this, that Christians do not resolve upon the strength of a Mediator; or, if they do resolve upon his strength, they are not much in the improvement of it for the bringing low of such iniquity; and we conceive, this was the ground that Peter's resolutions were brought so low, and were blasted; and this was somewhat pointed at, Isa. xl. 30, 31. where it is said, 'even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail.' The greatest natural abilities, which might help men to run, and not to be weary, and the most promising evidences from themselves shall fail and be blasted, 'but (as it is in verse 31.) they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength;' even those who are denied to their own strength. And we conceive, that there are these two great mysteries of Christianity, 1. To resolve so, as being convinced of this, that we are not able, as of ourselves, to think one good thought. And, 2. which is a little more mysterious to believe, that Christ's strength laid hold on by faith, is as effectual for the crucifying of such a lust, as if it were our own proper strength and excellency. Certainly, one that hath once swallowed this camel of Christianity, needs not strain at the lowest gnat of it. We would only say this by the way, study to flee comparative resolutions; for ordinarily these are much blasted, as was clear in Peter, 'though all should forsake thee, yet I will not.' Study to be positive in your resolutions, but beware of comparisons.

This is likewise occasioned through this, that ordinarily they determined the mortifying of such a lust, rather with their light than with their affections; as it is sometimes the exercise of a Christian when he goeth to prayer for the mortifying of such a lust, his light prayeth more than his affections; and sometimes it falls out, that when light and judgment is praying for the mortifying of such an idol, affection, as it were, entereth a protestation against the granting of such a desire, and, in a manner,

saith, 'Lord, mortify not such a lust.' This, we conceive, was the case and practice of those who are made mention of in Ezek. xiv. 4, 5. who came to enquire of the Lord, having their idols in their heart. We may put our idols from our mind, but have our idols in our heart, when we come to seek the mortification of them. And we would only say this unto you, when ye begin to resolve, study to have your souls under a divine impression of the sinfulness of such a lust; as likewise, under the infinite disadvantages of following such a lust. We conceive, that the ordinary time of a Christian's resolutions is, when they are blessed with the dew of heaven, and are admitted to taste of his sweetness: and oftentimes Christians' resolutions are rather according to their present frame, than according to that which probably will be their frame ere long: and this is the occasion that Christians, who are big in their resolutions, are often short and defective in their performances; or else we esteem it to be occasioned through a Christian's being too much given to slothfulness, and that woful idol of self-indulgence; they resolve fair, but do not take pains to accomplish their vows: this is clearly pointed at, not only Prov. xiii. 4. where it is said, 'The sluggard desireth, but he hath nothing;' but more clearly, Prov. xxi. 25. 'The desire of the sluggard slayeth him.' And the reason is subjoined, 'Because his hands refuse to labour.' It is most certain, that except a Christian be diligent, he can never be a mortified Christian. Mortification is not attained with ease, we must travail in pain, and have the pangs of the new birth before Christ be formed in us.

And there is this, *lastly*, which doth occasion it, Christians do not propose to themselves a sublime and divine end in mortifying of their lusts. And certainly, we conceive, this is the most ordinary and incident case unto his own, we either propose this end in the mortifying of our lusts, that we may have somewhat whereof to glory, and to make mention of our righteousness, even of ours only; or else we propose this carnal end of studying to have a name continually amongst the living in Jerusalem, lest that inward mystery of iniquity that is within us be engraven on our foreheads: and I think, certainly that name may be engraven upon many professors in this age, which Jude giveth them in the twelfth verse of his epistle; he calleth them, *twice dead;* that is, not only dead in reality, but that through the deceitfulness of sin, they had even lost any name of living they likewise had; so that it was also evanished and gone away. I am persuaded, that were we known one to another, as we are known to him who hath these seven eyes that run to and fro through the whole earth, no doubt, we should wonder at the boldness of our hope, and laugh at the strength of our delusions.

Now that which first we proposed to speak of from the words, was this, the advantage which a Christian hath by the mortifying of his lusts, and being continually exercised in this precious warfare: and (as we cleared at the last occasion) the advantage of a mortifying Christian was this, ordinarily such a Christian doth live under the impression of his interest in God, he is admitted to read his name written in the book of life; now this is clear from Rev. ii. 17. where he saith, 'To him that overcometh,' who is in the way of overcoming, 'will I give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it:' as likewise from Rev. ii. 1. 'He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death:' as also, from 2 Tim. iv. 8. where these two are sweetly conjoined and linked together. And it must certainly be so, that a mortifying Christian is one that liveth under the divine impression of his interest in God, not only because of this, that one who is not mortifying his lusts, as it were, doth darken his hope, and obscure his evidence; but every day's intermission of mortification being, as it were, a score drawn through the extract of our peace with God; so that, in process of time, that precious extract of peace becometh illegible unto us. And we shall say this, that a Christian, who can keep the faith of his interest without the exercise of mortification, may suspect the reality of such assurance. Mortification and assurance die and live together, are weak and strong together: but likewise it must be so, because of this, that ordinarily God rewardeth a mortified Christian with the intimation of his peace, he takes them in the eternal purposes of his heart, and the secrets of his counsel, and lets him see his name written in the records of heaven, lest he should faint in the day of his adversity, and so prove his strength to be small: did ye never know what such a thing as this meant, that when ye were most serious in the exercise of mortification, ye were admitted to behold that precious and everlasting hope? There is this *second* advantage that a Christian hath by being continually exercised in this blessed warfare, and it is this, mortification is that grace, which keeps all the graces of the Spirit in action and exercise: it is that superior wheel, at the motion of which all the inferior wheels do move; and (if we may so speak) mortification is this, it is all the graces of the Spirit combined in one, and exercising themselves in one divine act: faith is exercised by a mortified Christian, not only in this, in drawing furniture from Jesus Christ, who is our head; but likewise, in that it is the defensive piece of armour, it being called 'The shield of faith,' by which we quench the fiery darts of the devil. This war will

not proceed with much advantage, if faith be out of the field. So also, the grace of hope is exercised by a mortifying Christian; for this is its exercise in this blessed warfare, to help up the crown of immortal glory in its right hand, with that motto engraven upon it, 'He that persevereth to the end, shall be saved, and obtain this crown of life;' which is the great encouragement of a Christian in this exercise. Likewise, the grace of watchfulness is exercised in this blessed warfare; for watchfulness (if so we may speak) is the sentinel of the Christian, that standeth upon the watch tower, and giveth warning unto a Christian of the motion of his adversary: watchfulness warneth us when first corruption begins to stir; so the grace of love is much exercised in this blessed warfare: for a Christian where he beholds that divine and unsearchable compassion of Jesus Christ, which he exerciseth towards it in upholding it under its straits, that when the archers shoot at him, and do grievously wound him, that yet his bow should abide in strength, this makes the grace of love to burn and live in a Christian. And, *lastly*, the grace of prayer is much exercised in this blessed warfare; for when faith begins to die, and hope begins to lose its courage, when watchfulness begins to sleep, and love begins to be remiss and to wax cold, then prayer, as a flying cherub, doth go to the Captain of our salvation, and desireth that he may help them in the day of need. Prayer is the sweet correspondent of the Christian betwixt heaven and earth. Prayer stayeth upon the mount with Christ, when faith and watchfulness are in the field with our corruptions and lusts that are in us. And we shall only say this by the way, I know not whether a Christian be obliged to Jesus Christ more for justification than for sanctification: but, we conceive, it is better to conjoin these together, than to compare them one with another.

There is this *third* advantage that a mortifying Christian hath, such a Christian doth most ordinarily meet with most divine solace, and intimate communion and fellowship with God: such a Christian is admitted to taste of the honey out of the rock, and to be satisfied with the finest of the wheat. Would ye know the reason why you have not been in heaven these many days? It is this, ye have not been fighting these many days. Now this is clear from Rev. ii. 17. where that promise is given to the mortifying Christian, that he shall taste of the hidden manna;' which is the sweetness of Jesus Christ: as likewise, Rom. viii. 13. 'If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live: as also, Rom. viii. 24. compared with verse 25. where wrestling Paul doth receive songs of everlasting praise put in his mouth. Would ye know the person that is admitted to sing one

of the songs of Zion, while he is in 'a strange land?' It is the mortifying Christian, for when he is in the pursuit of his enemies, he is then admitted to put out his finger, and taste of the honey, that his eyes may be enlightened. There is a mortification that is pleaded for by many in these days, whose highest advancement in this precious grace doth not consist in that which it is, in knowing and being convinced of, and mourning over sin; but by this their mortification, that one should be dead to the sense and conviction of sin: we shall pass no other verdict upon such Antinomian mortification as this, but only this, it is indeed the mortification of godliness, it is a crucifying of repentance and holiness, it is a killing of the new man within a Christian; as likewise, a quickening of the old man in its lusts and affections. This mortification is no other thing, but Satan transformed into an angel of light, and this is a piece of the new gospel, which is so much preached in these days, which, if an angel should bring from heaven, we ought not to believe it: this is no new light, but old darkness, covered over with a vail of a glistering light. O! study to be much under the impression of the bitterness of sin, that so ye may taste of the consolations of the Holy Ghost.

There is this *fourth* advantage that a Christian hath by being continually exercised in this warfare, which is, that such a Christian hath distinct and perfect discoveries, not only of the deceitfulness of his own heart, but also of the subtilty of corruption and sin that doth assault him. A mortifying Christian, is a most experienced Christian; this is clear all along, Rom. vii. where wrestling Paul hath so distinct discoveries of himself, as he saith, 'There being a law in his members, rebelling against the law of his mind, and bringing him into subjection;' and certainly there is much precious advantage that redounds unto a Christian by being convinced of the deceitfulness of his own heart, and of the mystery of iniquity that is within him, for such a Christian doth attain to the exercise of the grace of humility; for when he beholdeth himself as in a glass, he crieth out, 'Woes me, I am undone.' I think it is in some sense lawful for Christians to practice much of Peter's divinity which he had, Luke v. 8. 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.' Not that it was well argued by him, but it spake out the high apprehensions he had of the holiness of God, and the low apprehensions he had of himself; as likewise such a Christian is much denied to his own strength, and so is necessitated to go unto one on whom his strength is laid; as likewise such a Christian is much in the exercise of the grace of watchfulness; he is not ignorant of the devices of Satan, which makes him to stand continually upon his guard, lest he be overtaken with the snares of the devil.

There is this *fifth* advantage that a Christian hath by being much in the exercise of mortification, and it is this, he doth attain to much divine conformity with God, and is made a partaker of the divine nature, of that invisible Majesty. This is clear from Rev. iii. where that promise, 'I will clothe him in white,' is in a part accomplished to a Christian, even while he is in this valley of tears. And certainly this is the compend and sweet epitome of all Christian advantages, to be made like unto the Majesty of God; and it is not a conformity unto him for a day, but such a mortifying Christian is most constant in keeping the divine lineaments and spiritual characters of that precious image undefaced in him, as it is promised, Rev. iii. 12. 'Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.' And certainly that promise of stability is in a part accomplished to a Christian, even while he is here below. What could a Christian desire more than this, to be admitted to partake of the image of the invisible God, and to be made like unto him?

There is this *last* advantage that a Christian hath by being continually exercised in this precious work of mortification, and it is this, such an one hath his antipathy and hatred against sin much increased. Would you know the Christian that liveth under the impression of the sinfulness of sin? It is the mortifying Christian. I think that vain distinction which papists have of mortal and venial sins, Christians in their practice do much allow and commend: there are some sins seems venial to them, which to commit and exercise they take a latitude to themselves; as may be clear in this, a Christian will, without much difficulty, if he be not tender, commit such things as are not consistent with the exercise of grace within him; he needs no other toleration but this, to have this made out to him, that there is a consistency betwixt such a lust, and the living and spiritual nature of grace within him: but, no doubt, if we argued right, we should be provoked to desist from sin, even from the disadvantages that attend the pursuing after any lusts.

Now that which we shall speak to next, shall be this, what disadvantages a Christian hath by an interruption of this spiritual warfare, and not being much taken up in the exercise of mortification. If this question were proposed to many, when they did last set some hours apart to mortify their sins? The most part would be put to a *non-plus*, not knowing the last time when they were exercised in this precious warfare. And I would only say this, a Christian that can interrupt the work of mortification for some weeks together, may either suspect that grace is groaning within him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man;

or else, that he is not at all begotten unto a lively hope; there is no furlough nor discharge in this warfare, but we must fight till once the one foot be within that place of everlasting delight.

There is this *second* disadvantage that attendeth a Christian, who interrupteth this warfare, and it is this, that ordinarily such a one doth contract much hardness and impenitency of heart; this was clear in the practice of David, who, when once he intermitted this war, could write a letter to the killing of godly Uriah, and no mention of smiting of heart. This is certainly a constant attendant of one who is not mortifying himself, he maketh his heart *die as a stone within him.* The mortifying Christian keeps his holy zeal within him, 'he hateth the garments spotted with the flesh:' would ye read the original and rise of hardness of heart in these days amongst us? It is this, Christians are not much in the exercise of mortification. And I believe the gospel hath been preached nigh six thousand years, and it is much to be debated, if ever misbelief and hardness of heart were so universal diseases among Christians, as in those days; we think to win to heaven by guess, which maketh us so little intend this blessed work.

There is this *third* disadvantage that a Christian meets with, by the intermission of this warfare, and it is this, that ordinarily such a Christian hath his lusts most reigning and living within him; sin will gather more strength, by the interruption of one day's exercise of mortification, than ye can prevail over by wrestling with it many days. This is that subtile dexterity of sin, it can recruit itself in a few hours with much ease; and certainly, if ye be not constant in this warfare, it is like ye will not sing many songs of triumph over your lusts; he must be constant in this fight, who would be a triumpher in the fight; how long is it since ye set up an Ebenezer to God, saying, 'Hitherto hath he helped me?' And when did ye set up trophies and monuments of your victory? We think, the Christians of this age leave fewer and less trophies of their victory in their way to heaven, than ever any that went before them.

There is this *fourth* disadvantage which a Christian hath, by the intermission of this warfare, and it is this, that ordinarily such a Christian liveth without sight of return, and overcoming at the last. A Christian who interrupteth this exercise of mortification, fighteth, as we speak, with a doubtful war, not having determined whether the fight shall be in his favour or not; there is somewhat of this pointed out in 1 Tim. iv. 8. where Paul, fighting in an agony, as the word importeth, persuaded himself that he shall have that crown of righteousness, which is the suitable reward of a conquering Christian. And believe me, I

know not what shall afford a Christian more Christian peace and consolation than this, 'To believe that he shall put all enemies under his feet, and make them his footstool.

There is this *fifth* disadvantage that a Christian interrupting the exercise of mortification hath, and it is this, that ordinarily such a one, when he is passing through the first and second gates of death, and when he is to render up an account of his stewardship, hath least persuasion of his interest in God. Would ye know the reason why Christians die with so little faith of evidence? It is this, they have not been much in the exercise of mortification. Certainly the conviction of short-coming in this duty, and the apprehension of eternity, and of approaching judgment, are two sweet companions together. I think, next to justification, and faith in Jesus Christ, which is the king of all our consolation, a Christian hath most peace in the work of mortification, in the day when he shall be standing upon that utmost line betwixt time and eternity. O! what consolation had old Paul, when he spake these words, when he was ready to be dissolved, 'I have fought the good fight of faith;' I doubt much, if ever Paul sang a song of praise upon a higher key, than when he sang that song, 2 Tim. iv. 8. 'I have fought the good fight of faith.' Paul's heart was half transported when he did reflect upon this, that all his lusts were dying and killed at his feet.

And there is this *last* disadvantage that attends a Christian who interrupts this warfare, and it is this, that ordinarily such a one is much blasted of God in the exercise of other graces; yea more, he is blasted in the exercise of gifts. These two losses will attend a Christian who interrupts this warfare; and certainly, if a Christian be blasted in grace, and be not blasted in gifts, it is one of the sorest strokes that can befal him; for certainly it is a pillow sewed under our arm-holes, which makes us pursue sin without fear. This is secretly hinted at, Eccles. ii. 9. where that which made Solomon rove after his idols was this also, 'My wisdom remained with me;' he was as wise a man now as he was before. And certainly, when gifts are vigorous, and graces not, they may sit down and lament over themselves *seven nights and seven days*.

Now we shall shut up our discourse at this time. We shall only speak a little to this, what may be spoken for consolation to those who are somewhat serious in accomplishing this warfare, and yet have not sensible advantage nor success over their lusts, who have been toiling all night, and yet have catched nothing. And we conceive, that God doth ordinarily propose to a tender Christian those three divine ends, by carving out to them such a lot, 1. That he may be kept in a constant corre-

spondence with the throne of grace; he, in a manner, wounds us in our legs, that we may not wander much abroad from his throne. And certainly Christians may be convinced of this, that if they had their will in mortifying, they would not be much in corresponding; which may be demonstrated unto you thus, because that which provoketh one to converse with God, is rather a principle of necessity, than a principle of love. A Christian will go six times to prayer, yea, many times, from a principle of necessity, before he go twice from a principle of love and delight. 2. That the Christian's faith may be put to trials, and exercised, whether or not they will believe, and rest upon him, notwithstanding that we see not mortification growing within us. We confess, our little advancement in mortification, is the foundation of misbelief. And certainly, to his own, God hath this design, even the trial of their grace, whether or not they will believe, and hope against hope. 3. The Lord doth it, because he knoweth that a Christian can better improve his little advancement in mortification, than he can improve his great success. Believe me, it is certain, that in a Christian's advancement in grace, it is more difficult to bear it, than to bear his little advancement and progress in grace; and the great reason and occasion of it is, because ordinarily pride and arrogancy do blossom and spring off this precious root of grace; for what doth decrease to a Christian of the lust of the eye and of the flesh, seems to accrease to the pride of life; for as the one seemeth to go down, the other doth ascend and go up. And to you, who never knew what this exercise of prayer and mortification meant (are there not many here, who never knew what it was to have any change in their life?) we would only propose this unto you, did ye never know what it was to be under the impression of the sinfulness of sin? or, Did you ever know what it was to water your couch with tears under the impression of it, like that word, Psalm xxxii. 3. where David saith, 'when I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long?' That word, *roaring*, speaketh forth not only this, that sometimes a Christian doth rather mourn as a beast, than complain as a man; (*roaring* being the voice of a beast) but likewise speaks forth this, that sometimes Christians are under such an exercise, that the open field is a more fit place for them than the secret retirements of their most quiet chambers. David was forced to roar as a beast, when the bones, which are the pillars of his house, were waxing old and mouldering within him. Certainly the day is coming, when ye, who never knew what it was to crucify a lust, Christ shall crucify you upon that cross of everlasting pain, when he shall tread you in the wine-press of the

indignation of the most High, when he shall make the arrows of his indignation sharp upon you: ye who will not quit sin, sin shall once be your eternal companion; and when Christ hath been inviting you so often to quit your lusts, and ye return so often a negative answer to him, this will be the sentence which shall be past upon you, 'Be it unto you, even as you will; they are joined to idols, let them alone.' And certainly, when Christ ceaseth to be a reprover, that man is in a sad and desperate estate. O! that ye might once fight this good fight of faith; your scent doth remain with many of you. Are there not many here, who never knew what it was to spend an hour in secret wrestling and debating with their lusts? The strong man keeps the house, and so all is at peace with them; there is no going out nor coming in at the gates of their city: but peace is, as it were, exactors of that house, and those that bear sway within it. O! cursed be that peace which shall end in everlasting war with God. Would ye know the exercise and case of those who are in everlasting chains? We can represent it under nothing so fit as this, it is infinite Justice, and infinite Omnipotency, wrestling and crushing finite and sinful man: sometimes the pestil of divine wrath coming down upon one part of his body, and at another time upon another; they are now living an endless life of death, and are spending their days in a dying life, they shall be eternally dying, and yet never be able to die. Are there not some of you who are so joined to your idols, that if Dives should come from hell, and preach this text to you, 'Crucify your lusts,' ye would stop your ears at that precious exhortation? Ye may hide sin under your tongue, but be persuaded, that at last it shall be in your belly as the poison of asps, and as the venom of dragons. And we would leave this advice and counsel upon Christians, who have begun this precious warfare, 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again into the yoke of bondage.' Sin is a yoke that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear; and we desire you to meditate upon this advice, study to be as much in mortification, and in the exercise of this duty, as if ye were to obtain salvation by works; but withal, study to be as much denied unto those things, and to have as low an esteem of yourselves, as if ye were bound to do nothing, or had done nothing at all: study to work as one that is a legalist indeed, and one who desires to maintain good works; but study self-denial, as one that hath fled for refuge unto that blessed hope that is set before you. Christ is standing at the end of the walk of a mortifying Christian, with a crown in his right-hand, and he desireth us to persevere unto the end, that we may obtain that immortal crown.

One day with precious Christ shall be an infinite recompence of all our toil; and the more exercise of mortification you are put to, heaven will be the more sweet and delightsome unto you.

SERMON IV.

GAL. v. 24. *And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

SUCH is that universal stupidity and hardness of heart, that hath overtaken the professors of this generation, that if Christ should come from heaven, and read over unto us the complete roll of our iniquities, and shew unto us the records in which all our wanderings are written, the most part of us would not be much affected in the exercise of sorrow. No doubt, 'it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle,' than for stupid Christians, such as we are, 'to enter into the kingdom of God.' It is one of the mysteries of his overcoming grace, that he hath not broken these two precious staves of beauty and bands amongst us, that he hath not broken the covenant of his peace, and ceased to entertain so near a relation betwixt himself and us. As always it is a mystery of his love, that we are not made eternal monuments of the justice of his love, and this motto engraven upon us, 'Behold these that made not God their refuge.' God is glorious in the exercise of all his holy attributes, but in none more than in the exercise of his patience and long-suffering towards us; and, in a manner, he darkeneth the glory of his justice, and casteth a vail over his spotless holiness, that the exercise of the attribute of patience and long-suffering may be rendered more conspicuous. I would only pose you with this question, Is not mortification a mystery unto our practice? Can such a delusion as this overtake you, that ye shall reign with Christ, though your lusts reign with you as long as you are here? It is certain, ye know that mortification is that precious exercise in which ye ought to be taken up: and I conceive that there is only this difference betwixt sinning against light, and that unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, that the sinning against light is a sinning against the common work of the Spirit upon your understandings, but the sin against the Holy Ghost is a sin against the common work of the Spirit upon the affections. And, no doubt, there is a near bordering upon these two, it is the first step to it, by which ye go up and ascend unto the acting of this sin. It is a faithful saying, saith the apostle Paul, 'If we die with Christ, we shall also reign with him.' And we may likewise say, 'It is a faithful saying, that if we be not with Christ, and be

not conformed unto him in his suffering, we cannot be conformed unto him in the power of his resurrection.' Ye are all willing to take Christ as a Justifier, and as a Saviour, but unwilling to take him as a Sanctifier and a Prince. But know this, that the gifts of this spotless Lamb are so sweetly linked together, that they were like his own coat that was upon his body, which was without seam, that could not be divided; and so, except the whole gifts of Jesus Christ fall upon us by divine lot, we can have no part nor portion therein. This mortification is the compend of Christianity; and certainly, a Christian reading these words, he may stand amazed, and be ashamed at his own stupidity, that interest in Christ should be connected with such a degree of mortification. Though we conceive, there be many who take to themselves the name of Christians, who never knew what it was to exercise themselves in mortification.

I shall only (before I proceed to that which mainly we intend to speak to) press this grace of mortification upon you by these things: *First*, This may enforce this duty of mortification of lusts, because it is impossible for one to satisfy their lusts, let them accomplish never so diligent a search to find satisfaction to them; therefore ye would be undeceived and convinced of that delusion, ye conceive, that, if your lusts had their desire, ye would be satisfied; but that is most clearly held forth to be false, Psalm lxxviii. 30. where it is said of their lusts, 'They got their heart's desire: and the words that are subjoined, 'yet were they not estranged from their lusts.' Let a covetous man suppose this with himself, that upon the having so many thousands in this world, his lust of covetousness would be satisfied: but Job doth refute this, chap. xx. 22. saying, 'In the fulness of his sufficiency, he shall be in straits.' It is easier to mortify your lusts, than to satisfy them. And this, *Secondly*, we would say, that though ye hide sin under your tongue, and though it be sweet unto you, ye know, that the day is approaching, when it shall be in your bowels, as the gall of asps, and as the poison of dragons: know this for a certainty, that the momentary pleasures of sin which they afford unto you, are not worthy to be compared with that eternal weight of unsupportable misery that shall be inflicted upon you. O! but it is a terrible sight, to behold 'a living God' entering eternally in the lists with a poor sinful sinner, to have Omnipotency and Justice fighting against the dust of his feet. There is this, *Lastly*, which we would say: not exercising yourselves constantly in this precious work of mortification, doth interrupt much fellowship that you may have with Christ; ye that are tasting of the sweetness of sin, cannot taste of the sweetness of heaven; this is clear, Rom. viii. 13. where morti-

fiers have that promise, that *they shall live.* And I shall only say this by the way, we conceive it to be a question that is difficult to determine, whether it be more for the advantage of one that is under any predominant lust, to have the objects upon which it feeds withdrawn, or to have them furnished, to feed upon? As, for instance, if one be under the woful predominant of pride, it is a question whether the want of occasion to exercise and feed that lust, be better, or to have it? Proud Ahithophel, when he wanted the objects upon which pride doth feed, he will go and strangle himself; and when we have them furnished unto us, what secret idolatry, what desperate atheism do we commit in the secret temples of our hearts, and in the chambers of our imagery? Mortify more, or ye shall pray less.

Now that which we intend mainly to speak to, is that *second* thing which we proposed concerning mortification, from these words, and it was the extent of mortification, that they did not only crucify their predominant lusts, which are here called affections, because they are idols, and these are linked together by the passions of love; but likewise, they ought to mortify the first motions and stirrings of corruption, and all occasions to it, which are here called lusts: but moreover, one that is a spiritual mortifier, must mortify original sin, which is here called the flesh, as oftentimes it hath that name in scripture, an exercise which is unknown to many, if not unto all. We think original sin but a Zoar, and it is hard indeed to be convinced of the sinfulness of original sin, and to take it up in its native colours. Now, in speaking upon the work of mortification of original sin, we shall not insist long upon this, that it is the duty of a Christian to be exercised in the crucifying of this sin, it is clear from Gal. iii. 5. where we are commanded to *mortify our members;* and it is clear from the practice of Paul, Rom. vii. 24. 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' There is a strong emphasis in the word *me;* as if Paul would have said, 'If infinite grace can have bounds, then, no doubt, sinful Paul is the bounds fixed to it.

We shall, for more clear speaking to this, *first*, speak a little unto this, 'what is original sin?' And we conceive that it stands in these, original sin is the imputation of that transgression of Adam unto us; for he being a common and representative person, we fell in his falling, and did stand in his standing; but likewise, original sin doth comprehend this, 'want of original righteousness.' Man not being created after that noble pattern and divine idea, *the image of God*, man now carrieth the image of God in his wisdom, and in his omnipotency; but while he was in his primitive state, he did carry the impression of the holiness of God;

as likewise, original sin doth comprehend this, a proneness to the committing of all evil; as also, an inaptitude and unfitness for the doing of any good. And this is that which we are all by nature. The first part of original sin, is clear from Rom. v. ver. 12. and 14. And the rest may be gathered from many places of scripture, but is comprehended in that one word, Eph. ii. 1. 'we are dead in sins and trespasses.' One can no more move in the acting of any spiritual good, than if he were one altogether without life.

We shall, *secondly*, speak a little to those advantages that a Christian may have by being convinced of original sin. It is most certain, that a Christian is less convinced of original corruption, than he is of any actual transgression, almost, that doth befal him; and, as we were speaking, the reason of it doth proceed partly from this, that a Christian taketh not up the sinfulness of original sin, though it be a sin having more in it than is in twenty, yea, an hundred actual transgressions; or else it proceedeth from this, that Christians are not convinced what influence original sin hath upon all the outward actings of iniquity; it is that fruitful womb that doth always bear twins, and is never barren; it is that root that doth daily bring forth wormwood and gall; or else it doth proceed from this, that we think that original sin is not our own, and that we are not so guilty as if indeed we had eaten the cursed apple.

But as to the advantage of being convinced of original corruption, we conceive that there is this first advantage, that it is impossible for any to have high thoughts of Jesus Christ's love, and of the offers of mercy, except he be convinced of original sin. Would ye know the reason why Christ hath so small an esteem among you? It is because of this, ye are not convinced of your original corruption. This is somewhat pointed at, Rom. v. 6, 7, 8. verses, where the apostle heighteneth the love of Christ in dying for us, he pitches upon this to commend it, or original corruption, *that we were sinners, and without strength.* O what a mystery is the condescending grace of Christ unto a sinner believing original corruption! It is, as it were, the foundation upon which all our esteem doth arise and spring. There is somewhat of this likewise pointed at, Rom. vii. 24. compared with verse 25. where Paul beginneth to commend free grace, his song doth arise to the highest key, because he hath been convinced of 'this body of death that dwelleth within him.' I would only say this, if ye would learn this divine lesson of putting a high account upon Christ, study original corruption much.

There is this *second* advantage that a Christian hath from the conviction of it, and it is this, it doth exceedingly commend the

omnipotency of his grace in mortifying corruption, when ye are convinced of this sin. When was it that Paul had the highest account of the omnipotency of the grace of Christ? Was it not when he was forced to cry out, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' And this is certainly pointed at, Eph. ii. 1. where the quickening virtue of grace is commended from this, the object upon which it is exercised, 'Ye that are dead in your sins and trespasses.'

There is this *third* advantage that floweth from the conviction of original sin, and it is this: it is a compendious way to keep the Christian under the exercise of humility, under the highest attainments of mortification, or under the highest attainments of communion and fellowship with God. Would ye know the reason why we are so easily puffed up under some small success, or some small familiarity with Christ? It is want of reflex thoughts upon original corruption that is within us. Therefore I would prescribe this to Christians under their highest advancement, by grace to sit down and seriously reflect upon that which they are by nature, 'That their father is an Amorite, and their mother an Hittite,' and the rock from whence ye are hewn may preach humility to them: this is clear, Rom. vii. 24. where Paul, under the conviction of original sin, calleth himself a *wretched man*, and is clear also from verse 9. of that chapter, where, when once original sin is discovered, *he died* in his own apprehensions. If we were in the apprehension of this more, the wind of the wilderness would not bind us up in her wings till our substance were dissolved.

There is a *fourth* advantage a Christian hath from the conviction of original corruption, and it is this, it keepeth the Christian under the deepest impression of the sinfulness of sin. I confess, that is one of the greatest mysteries of Christianity, to have our souls constantly under the impression of the sinfulness of sin, which we conceive is impossible to be attained without solid conviction of original corruption. This is somewhat hinted at, Rom. vii. 13. when Paul once, by the commandment, having original sin discovered, sin became unto him *exceeding sinful*: and the reason why original sin discovered hath such influence upon this is, because ordinarily we conceive that the actings of sin do not proceed from ourselves, but from the *deceiver of the brethren*, which James doth abundantly refute; 'for when a man is tempted, he is tempted of his lusts.'

There is this *fifth* advantage that a Christian hath by being convinced of original sin, and it is this, it is an excellent way to keep the Christian under a most watchful and fearing frame. Such language would not be heard out of Hazael's mouth, 'am

I a dog to commit this,' if he had been convinced of original sin; but because he was a stranger to this, his presumption led him above that which was indeed within him. Therefore, when one is convinced of their proneness to act iniquity, of their want of conformity with God, they remember to stand upon their watch-tower, lest they be ensnared: this is most clearly pointed at, 1 Cor. ix. 27. where Paul is put to this exercise, 'I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, and the reason subjoined, because he was possessed with a holy jealousy of himself, and entertained a divine suspicion, which was consistent with the actings of hope. I know nothing to make a Christian watch over his own heart so much as this, to see that spawn of iniquity which is within him, to behold that fruitful mother of iniquity, which never was declared barren, and never shall be, till sin shall be no more within his own.

There is this *sixth* advantage a Christian hath, by being convinced of original corruption, and it is this, it is that which will keep the soul under the highest estimation of Christ, and will make the grace of love to burn most vigorously within a Christian. O! but when one shall reflect upon these two; 1st. The spotless *holiness of Christ*, that absolute purity of that precious Lamb. 2dly, And shall again descend to reflect upon these mysteries of iniquity, which are within himself, it is no wonder, that sometimes he be put to use Peter's divinity, to cry out, 'depart from me, for I am a sinful man;' but when he improveth his sight most fully, his cases, to have his soul transported, and, as it were, in a holy extasy of love toward that precious and matchless One.

And there is this *last* advantage that a Christian hath, by being convinced of original sin, and it is this, it is that which putteth a Christian to a holy diffidence in his own strength, and maketh him to be much in the employment of the strength of him whose name is Jehovah. What is the reason that Christians commit a breach of that first command, so much trusting to their own strength, and not 'making mention of his righteousness, and laying hold upon 'his strength, even upon his only?' It is this, because we do not dwell under the constant impression of original corruption. We conceive, it is as great a mystery to men's judgment, as it is a mystery to their practice to mortify it. What made Paul so much to cry out, Rom. vii. 18. to disclaim his own ability? and verses 23, 6. Was it not the conviction of original sin which was within him?

Now that which we shall, *secondly*, speak unto, shall be this, to press a little upon you the necessity of the mortification of original sin. And we conceive these things point out its neces-

sity, *First*, This, that all mortification is vain, and as the beating of the air, until once original corruption be mortified. What is all your mortification without this? As it were the lopping off of the branches, while the root doth remain entire; it is a damming up of the streams, while the fountain is still running; no doubt, that mortification will easily grow vain.

You must once mortify that which is the mother of sin. And we would only say this by the way, that under correction, we conceive that original sin is not, nor cannot well be mortified in the body, but only is to be mortified in the members; that is, we must study to mortify such a part of original sin, to mortify some living lusts which are within us, and to be groaning under the rest: for, we conceive, it is hard to take up the whole body of original sin, and to make that the subject of mortification, or to lament over it.

There is this, *secondly*, which speaks forth the necessity of mortification of original sin, it is that which is an undeniable evidence of a Christian, to be taken up in the mortifying of this sin; for we conceive it to be impossible for a hypocrite to attain to such a length, as to study the real mortification of original corruption. It was the practice of these two holy men, the apostle Paul, Rom. vii. 24, and of David, Psalm li. 5. where they sit down to lament over the iniquity which was within them. And the reason why the mortification of original sin is an undeniable character and evidence of a Christian, is not only from this, that one that setteth about the mortification of original sin, is a Christian that hath most discoveries of himself; as likewise, some discoveries of the holiness and spotlessness of God. It is hard to be convinced of original sin by the light of nature, if at all; for to us it is a question if it can be, which the apostle seemeth to intimate, Rom. vii. 7. saying, 'I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet.'

There is this, *thirdly*, which speaks forth the necessity of the mortification of original corruption, that all the duties that proceed from a Christian, are exceedingly defiled and polluted, except he endeavour the mortification of this sin; for this was a paradox to the apostle James, chap. iii. 11. 'That a fountain at one place shall send forth bitter water and sweet.' And till the fountain of corruption be removed, it is probably to be conceived, that all the actings of duty by us shall be exceedingly polluted. O but when original sin lies without the stroke of a Christian's mortification, his duties will not ascend with acceptance upon his altar.

And there is this, *fourthly*, which pleads the necessity of the mortification of original sin, that it is that sin which doth ex-

ceedingly war against the grace of God in a Christian. Would you know why grace is in such a languishing estate? It is because of the power of original sin. We conceive this, that the opposition of original sin to the advancement of grace, is more invisible; and the opposition of actual corruption unto the actings of grace, is more visible and obvious; but certainly, that which doth entangle a Christian in his walk, and maketh him not to ascend as pillars of smoke from this present wilderness, is that original sin. This is clear from Rom. vii. 23. and Gal. v. 17. where the spirit warreth against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit, and these are contrary the one to the other.

Now that which, *thirdly*, we shall speak upon the mortification of original sin, shall be this, what is the way how a Christian may be convinced, and brought unto the spiritual impression of originsinal? And certainly we conceive, that if a Christian shall exercise himself in these three, he may attain to some spiritual conviction of this sin. *First*, Let him be much in the exercise of self-examination, and when he shall reflect upon himself, he will behold the invisible motions of iniquity unto every sin that hath been named among the Gentiles; who is so great a stranger unto his own heart, but if he will reflect upon it, may sometimes see the stirrings of almost unknown corruptions? Which speaketh that aloud to the Christian, that there is a fountain and spring within him, that would send forth such bitter waters, except they were graciously restrained.

There is this, *secondly*, by which a Christian may be brought to the conviction of original sin, and it is this, to be much in the exercise of the study of the spirituality of the law, which was the way that Paul attained to the conviction of original sin, Rom. vii. It is that compendious cut, by which one may behold that holiness of God, who imposeth a command, not only to desist from the actings of sin, but to desist also the first motions and lusts of sin.

There is this, *lastly*, a Christian would be much in the exercise of prayer, for that Spirit, who convinceth the world of sin, that what you do not know as of yourselves, he, who is the great convincer of the world, may imprint those convictions upon your souls, which may make you sit down and bewail yourselves, in the bitterness of your spirit; and we shall at this time shut up our discourse, only we would say to those who are entertaining this holy warfare against their corruptions, that they would not be much discouraged, though they see not sensible victory. You must know, that sin must be with you while you have a being. We may certainly allude to that word, Dan. vii. 12. and we may say, 'that the dominion of your sins shall

be taken away, though their lives be prolonged for a time, and for a season.' As likewise we shall say this for your encouragement, who have your corruptions stirring most within you, that ordinarily Satan, when he is in the way to remove, then stirreth and acteth most; as is observed, that the last beating of the pulse of a dying man is most strong; so the beating of corruption, when it is going to be cast out, may be most violent: and we shall only give the reason why Christians are not much affected with this, that the day is coming when once they shall prevail over their corruptions, and shall tread Satan under their feet, why the feet of those who bring such good tidings are not beautiful upon the mountains? And we conceive, that it doth either proceed from this, that Christians are not seriously engaged in this holy warfare; for it is most certain, that if you were fighting day by day, then the hope of victory and of a blessed issue, would be as glad tidings from a far country, and should be as cold water to a thirsty soul, that though your hope were deferred until your hearts were sick, yet the accomplishment of your desires should be sweet to your souls; or else it doth proceed from this, that Christians do not believe this truth, that there is an issue and period of their fight, if once you could be brought this length to seal this truth, that that victory shall be once heard in heaven, 'speak comfortably unto Jerusalem, for her warfare is accomplished,' if we may allude unto these words: or if a Christian be seriously debating with his lusts, and hath also the faith of this truth in some measure, then it doth proceed, *lastly*, from this, want of the distinct persuasions of our interest, and want of the assurance of our peace with him; for as long as a Christian is under debate concerning his eternal rest, he cannot be much affected with joy under the declaration of these means, that there is a period of their fight, and that they who have 'been made partakers of the first resurrection, over them the second death shall have no power.' O what a blessed day, suppose ye, shall that be, when your feet shall stand within the gates of the New Jerusalem, when ye shall receive these two precious badges and eternal trophies of your victory, 'a crown put upon your head,' of infinite more value than all material crowns, and 'a palm put in your hand!' We conceive, it is impossible to determine what joy will accrue to a Christian upon the reflex thoughts of this, that he hath trode Satan under his feet; and hath bruised the head of him who hath so often bruised his heel. And as for those who are strangers, as the most part of us are, unto this spiritual warfare, be convinced of this, that within threescore and fewer years, God shall enter into an eternal warfare with you, where there shall be no ces-

sation of arms, neither shall there be any interruption. It is better to fight with your lusts, than to fight with a living and eternal God, when he shall declare himself to be your opposite and enemy.

Man once was made perfect, but he did find out many inventions, and among all those inventions, he found that accursed one, 'how there might be a separation betwixt him and the living God;' and except he, whose name is Prudence, and hath found out the knowledge of many witty inventions, had found out that precious invention of reconciling sinners unto God, we should have been *Magor Missabib*, a terror to ourselves. O that you might be persuaded once to contend with your lusts, that ye may endure the heat of the day, and the cold of the night, in wrestling against sin. Know this, that 'sin goeth not out but by fasting and prayer,' it is so straitly united unto us: it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for many of us to mortify our corruption. We shall shut up all that we would say in this one word, Be persuaded of this, that the day is approaching, and near at hand, when our blessed Lord Jesus shall come with ten thousand of his saints. What if this were the day, O unmortified sinners! that ye should behold that white throne fixed in the clouds, and ye should have a summons given into your hands without continuation of days, to appear before his tribunal? What would ye answer when ye were reproved? Would not silence and confession be your defence? Certainly there is an eternal curse to be pronounced against those who do not exercise themselves unto this precious act of godliness, of 'crucifying the flesh, with the lusts and affections thereof.' There is a law of death over your head, and there is a law of sin, which is within your hearts, and ye shall be eternally subjects unto these two laws, except 'the law of the Spirit of life make you free.'

SERMON. V.

GAL. v. 24. *And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

THE work of a Christian, who hath Christ in him the hope of glory, is most sublime, and it being from spiritual principles, for spiritual ends, is also according to a spiritual rule. The walk of a Christian is from faith and love in Jesus Christ, as that predominant principle; nay more, from the Spirit of Christ living in the soul of a Christian by faith, and dwelling

in it by love, which is that *primum mobile*, and first wheel of all its motions; as likewise, it is for a spiritual end, it being for the glory of God, and, subordinate unto this, their own salvation and advantage: they are not like 'Ephraim, empty vines, bringing forth fruit unto themselves; but it is their design to make Christ all, themselves nothing, though it be natural unto a man to deify himself, and to make himself the first Alpha of his actings, and the last Omega of his performances; as likewise, it is according to a spiritual rule, it being conformed unto that precious word of life, which is perfect in itself, and leadeth man unto perfection. But this is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation, that we love to take such a liberty to ourselves, and such a latitude in our way and walk to heaven. There is much fear and complaint amongst many, for the loss of their civil liberties, and that they are detained captives in their own land by the hand of strangers: but there is a captivity and bondage that is less lamented, and yet more untolerable, and that is, the bondage of sin and iniquity, that though we should expire, and spend seventy years (which is one of the utmost lines of our life) under this captivity, yet we should not cry out, 'Return our captivity as the rivers of the south.'

Are there not many amongst us, who lie with as much contentment under the bonds of their sin, and fetters of their iniquity, as if they were chains of gold, and ornaments of fine gold? Mortification is a mystery unto our practice. That which was a paradox to Saul, that a man should find his enemy, and yet keep him alive, that paradox is often committed in these days, when we do not study to crucify the lusts and affections of our hearts. I think Christians, in these days, when they reflect upon those unmortified corruptions that are within them, must be constrained to cry out, that all their hope doth consist in this, 'That a living dog is better than a dead lion;' and that their confidence is terminated upon this, and yet they are within this side of eternity. We love singularity in opinion, but hate singularity in practice; though the one, no doubt, is much more commendable than the other. May we not wish for two months wherein we may go unto the mountains and bewail our virginity, that we have not been espoused unto that precious and excellent one Jesus Christ, and that we have not been endeavouring to conform ourselves unto his blessed and precious image? We confess, this may be a mystery to many every day, that they are not eternal monuments of the justice and indignation of God, and that somewhat of Cain's divinity doth not possess our hearts, 'That whosoever shall find us shall kill us. We would only say this, that ye would be as much in the exercise

of the mortification of your invisible lusts, as ye are in the exercise of the mortification of your visible sins and iniquities.

At the last occasion that we spoke upon these words, we told you, that the *second* thing that was held forth concerning mortification, was the extent of it, that a Christian ought to mortify not only original corruption, but also his predominant lusts, and the first motions and occasions unto sin. Concerning the mortification of original sin, we have spoken somewhat, and shall insist no further: only we would say this, that we laid down this as a conclusion, that original sin could not be mortified in its body, but only was to be mortified in its members; and the ground of this assertion we conceive to be this, because it is impossible for a Christian to take up original sin in its body; as is clear from Jer. xvii. 9. where it is said, 'That the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?' It is above the reach of any man to fathom and comprehend the deceitfulness of his own heart. It is a mystery that was never unfolded, as long as we are within time, and cannot be unfolded. We would only say this, that a Christian, who is convinced of original sin, that there is the spawn and seed of every imaginable corruption within him, will be much in the magnifying of restraining grace, and will sit down and pen a song of praise unto the unsearchable grace of Christ, who hath redeemed them. I confess, that which makes Christians have so much to do with pardoning grace, which was David's practice, 1 Sam. xxv. 32. We may call original sin *Gad*, for after it cometh forth a troop, *Chorus vitiorum*, a troop of vices. It is that fruitful womb that doth always bear twins. And we conceive that Christians, who are so called, ought to be much in the study of original sin. It is a wonder that we walk with so much contentment to heaven, and to that imagined happiness which ye suppose to have. Can such a delusion as this overtake you, that you can reap in joy, who never did sow in tears? and that you can 'return bringing sheaves in your bosom,' who never went forth 'bearing precious seed?' We think to climb to heaven by that short ladder of presumption, I would say it, and wish that you may consider it, we are afraid that there shall be many woful and sad disappointments of many of our hopes, and we shall be constrained to reject our confidence; we separate those things God hath conjoined; we either pursue for holiness without justification, or else we pursue for justification without holiness.

Now in speaking upon the mortification of predominant lusts, which are here called affections, because the spirit of a Christian, and [of any, are most strongly united unto these, we shall not insist to prove this unto you, that it is the duty of a

Christian, or any, to mortify their predominant lusts: it is clear from Matth. xviii. 8, 9. where we are commanded 'to pluck out our right eye, if it offend us.' The meaning of which is this, that if we had a lust as dear to us as our right eye, if it hurt and offend us, we should pluck it out; and from Mark ix. 44. and 47. and from Col. iii. 5. where we are command to 'mortify our inordinate affections.' Neither shall we insist much upon that distinction of predominant lusts, that there are some predominant lusts which are more pure and refined, which ordinarily pass under the notion and vail of virtue; as pride, when it is mixed with prudence in its actings, passeth under the vail of generosity; and highness of spirit and prodigality, when it is not sensual and brutish, passeth under the notion of mortification to the world; and Satan, in tempting people to the acting of these predominant lusts, doth not only study to gain the affections, but likewise studieth to gain our light and our judgment unto the acting of these things. There are some predominant lusts which are more gross, the sinfulness of which is more easily discerned; and Satan, in tempting people to the acting of these lusts, studieth mainly to gain the affections; which in so far gaineth the judgment, as it sets about to devise and meditate upon the way how such predominant lusts may be effectuated and accomplished. O but the mind of man will plot subtile iniquity, and the affections and heart will execute plottings of the mind with the greatest carefulness and sedulity.

Now that which, *first*, we shall speak upon the work of the mortification of predominant lusts, shall be this, what are these disadvantages that a Christian hath by not studying to mortify and crucify his predominant lusts, but giving way and concession to them to live?

The *first* disadvantage we conceive to be this, that a Christian, who is not much in the mortification of his predominant lusts, doth hinder much of that precious fellowship and divine familiarity which should be betwixt God and him. The giving way to the king of our lusts to live friends, and that word, is true, that 'a brother offended, is harder to be won than a strong castle.' Now this is clear from Ezekiel xiv. 5. where it is said, 'They are estranged from me by their idols:' as likewise, v. 7. of that chap. 'Every one that separateth himself, whether of Israel, or a stranger, and setteth up idols in his heart,' &c. A separation from God, and setting up idolatry, are two inseparable companions. As likewise, it is clear from Ezek. xliv. 10. where these are conjoined again: and Isa. lix. 2. 'Your iniquities have separated betwixt you and me.' And I would only say this, that a Christian, who can, to his apprehension, find most sweetness and enjoyment of

God, without the exercise of mortification, may question much the reality of his enjoyment. And it is certain, that the entertaining of predominant lusts doth exceedingly interrupt communion and fellowship with God; not only because of this, that predominant lusts, when they are in exercise, do exceedingly weaken a Christian in diligence, and in his zeal and fervency in going about these duties, by which communion with God is attained. Some folk's predominant lusts have gotten such advantage over them, that they will almost cease to pray without conviction; or if they be convinced, their convictions will suddenly evanish; but also, because of this, that when a predominant lust is in its vigorous exercise, then a Christian loseth much of the impression of the sweetness of communion and fellowship with Christ, O! but Christ might live long in heaven ere we give him a visit; we think we could be happy without him, and that is but an imaginary delusion of our lying lusts.

There is this *second* disadvantage that a Christian hath, by not studying to crucify his predominant lusts, and it is this, that such a Christian doth not receive any return of prayer, and God doth deny to him the answer of his desire; this is clear from Ezek. xx. 31. where he saith, 'Do ye pollute yourselves with your idols, and come and enquire at me? As I live, saith the Lord, I will not be enquired of by you.' And this was the divinity of that blind man, John ix. 31. 'God heareth not sinners;' and it was the divinity of David, Psalm lxvi. 18. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' And most clearly, Isa. lix. 2. where their iniquities doth cause him deny to hear their suits. O! but there are many inhibitions served in heaven against the professors of this generation, that they should pray, and not be heard, and should cry, and yet not have access; and certainly it is no wonder, that such prayers as we present unto God, while our predominant lusts are in exercise, be not heard: we pray to God with such indifferency and formality, as, in a manner, we turn over our prayers unto a compliment to salute God with in the mornings, and to take our farewell of him at night, we know not much more use of many of our prayers, and hence it is that he denieth to us the answer of them. I would only speak this to you, let Christians hearts first speak the words which they are to speak in prayer, and then let their words speak their heart, that their heart may indite that which is the matter of their desires.

There is this *third* disadvantage that a Christian hath, by entertaining his predominant lusts, and it is this, it doth exceedingly interrupt a Christian's motion unto heaven: how far have you gone these many days, or these many years? The motion

of Christians is retrograde in these days, they go backward, but do not 'go on from strength to strength. O! that we might give obedience to that command, which is in Heb. xii. 1. 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.' More mortification would make more motion toward heaven than we do attain to.

There is this *fourth* disadvantage that a Christian hath, by entertaining his predominant lusts, and it is this, that when a predominant lust is not mortified, then any corruption that is within you will easily be discovered in the day of trial; the Lord oft-times taketh that revenge upon many, that because they would not mortify at home, he will write their iniquities in legible letters upon their foreheads, that those that run may read them. And if Christians believed this more, that God may be provoked to write your lusts that are not mortified in capital letters upon your foreheads, it might provoke you more to be in this exercise. This is clear from Ezek. xvi. 36. compared with verse 37. where their entertaining of their idols is threatened with this curse, 'That he will discover their nakedness, and make the shame thereof to appear.'

There is this *fifth* disadvantage that a Christian hath by it, and it is this, that in the day when he shall be passing through the valley of the shadow of death, and shall be looking long and endless eternity in the face, then a predominant lust unmortified will be bad company, and will raise a storm within the conscience, which will not be easily appeased. There are not many of us fit for eternity, neither do we live as though we were daily to die. If you would walk with peace through the first and second gates of death, study the mortification of your lusts. O, but at the singing of that triumphant song, 'O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?' shall not the soul be fraughted with divine consolation and unspeakable joy!

There is this last disadvantage that waits upon the Christian, and it is this, that such an one doth exceedingly marr all the performances which he goeth about, and, as it were, leaveth a print of his hands upon these most holy and excellent duties. A Christian, who hath a predominant lust, and is not studying to mortify it, his gifts pray more than his graces: as likewise, he is more in seeking the approbation of men than the praise of God. A Christian that doth not study to mortify his lusts, he is more in seeking the ornaments of Christianity than the substance of it. I think, the vitals and essentials of Christianity are much exhausted and spent; and there are some few bones left, rather the picture and anatomy of a Christian, than really such a one:

as likewise there is this, one who doth not study to mortify his predominant lust, he will not make conscience in obeying the commandment of faith; and this likewise brings on him much hardness and impenitency of heart. O but oft-times, through the deceitfulness of sin, our hearts becometh as a stone within us, and we are delivered into the hands of our iniquities.

Now that which, *secondly*, we shall speak to upon the mortification of predominant lusts, shall be this: what is that profound subtilty and desperate deceitfulness that Satan useth in tempting people to the actings of their predominant lusts? We have six thousand years experience, that he is a liar and a murderer from the beginning, though we believe the flatteries of sin, as though our iniquities were of good report, and of known integrity, that never did deceive. And we conceive, that Satan's subtilty doth appear in these, *first*, his subtilty doth appear in this, that ordinarily when a Christian, or any, is in a most secure or presumptuous frame, then Satan acts and tempts a Christian to the acting of his predominant lust, when Christ is away, then he doth assail. This is most clearly pointed at, Luke xxii. 31. where Christ saith to Peter, 'Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat.' And if ye will read Matth. xxvi. 33. ye will behold Peter's frame, that he was in a high string of presumption, 'Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended:' as likewise, it is clear from 2 Sam. xi. 2. where, when David was lying upon his bed, and walking upon the roof his house, then he is tempted to the acting of the sin of uncleanness. Satan studieth to catch his advantage, especially at that time when we are most prone to embrace, and most unapt to resist; therefore it should be a Christian's endeavour to exercise watchfulness, and to stand upon his watch-tower.

There is this, *secondly* wherein his subtilty doth appear, that ordinarily he doth propose the imaginary advantage of embracing such a lust, and doth affect our affections with the pleasure of it, but doth not make mention of the disadvantage and infinite hurt that doth appear and come from such a lust. This was clear in his first temptation with our first father, he makes mention of this, 'If thou eat of the forbidden fruit, thou shalt be as God;' but no mention made of this, 'that he should be a sinner.' And most clearly in Matth. iv. 8. where Satan sheweth unto that holy and spotless One all the kingdoms of the world, with the glory of them: and these things he promised to give Christ, and shewed him the glory of the kingdoms of the world, but did not shew to him the vexation and toil of these kingdoms: and, no doubt, the one is much more than the other. The hook wherewith he studieth to take us, is varnished over

with the bait of imaginary divinity, with transient pleasures, and with passing vanities. O that we were wise as serpents, to know the depths of Satan, that we might not be ensnared nor taken by enticements.

There is this, *thirdly*, wherein it appeareth, that ordinarily he studieth either to extenuate the sinfulness of sin, that a Christian may be brought to call this but a Zoar; or else he studieth to prove the consistency betwixt such a sin, and the reality of the grace of God; and when once a Christian is brought to such a length as to debate the reality of the grace of God's consistency with the acting of such a lust, they are near a fall, for then they cry out, 'Master, pardon me when I shall bow my knee in the house of Rimmon, and when my master leaneth upon my hand:' they then take an indulgence and a latitude to themselves to commit that iniquity.

There is this, *fourthly*, wherein his subtilty doth appear, that oft-times he will restrain the temptations to the acting of your predominant lusts, and withdraw the objects of them, that either you may be put off your watch, or, which is more ordinary, that lusts may take away life, when the object of lust is withdrawn. And that is most certain, that lust oft-times groweth most, when there are fewest temptations to assail it; for, upon the absence of our idols, our love to these things doth increase; a lusting Ammon will wax lean every day, when he wants the object whereupon to feed.

There is this, *fifthly*, wherein his subtilty doth eminently appear, that ordinarily he will tempt people to the acting of those sins that are introductive, and bring on the acting of their predominant lusts: he will tempt one that is given to uncleanness, to pride, idleness, fulness of bread. And certainly, one who is given to the evil of pride, he will tempt him to the smaller actings of these sins, that so he may ascend by degrees: he will study to seize upon the out-forts of the soul, that so he may gain the affections: he will break the covenant that we have made with our eyes, that so we may break the covenant that we have made with our heart.

There is this, *lastly*, wherein his subtilty doth appear, that ordinarily he will tempt people to the acting of their predominant lust, under the vail of virtue and things commendable; as, he will tempt one to covetousness upon this account, that they may be capacitated to be charitable to the poor, and may be useful to those who want in their generation: he will tempt one to sin, as is clear, Rom. iii. 6. that the grace of Christ may be more conspicuous in pardoning them: he tempted Christ to presumption under the vail of faith, as is clear, Matth. iv. 6, 'If thou

be the Son of God, cast thyself down;' and the ground he giveth is, 'For it is written, he shall give his angels charge concerning thee,' &c. And likewise he tempts many to the acting of misbelief under the vail of humility, knowledge, and distinct apprehensions of God.

That which, *thirdly*, we shall speak to shall be, to give you some evidences whether or not ye have attained unto the mortification of your predominant lusts, and whether indeed ye have sung a song of triumph over them; and having spoken somewhat of this before, we shall not insist much upon it; only we would say these three things, *first*, that a Christian that can reflect upon lusts which he supposed to be mortified with delight, and want of the exercise of grief, may suspect the reality of this mortification. O but one that can meditate upon his predominant lust, which he supposed was mortified, and yet not be constrained to cover himself with ashes, and to put sackcloth upon his loins, may cry out, *miserere mei*, have pity upon me.

And there is this *second* evidence that your predominant lust is not mortified, when ye are not sedulous and careful to eschew all things that lead unto the acting of that predominant sin. If ye be not giving obedience unto that command, 1 Thess. v. 22. 'Abstain from all appearance of evil,' you may question the reality of your mortification. It is an excellent practice of a Christian, to be as much under the impression of the sinfulness of predominant lust and sin after it is mortified, and to be as much in pursuing it, as when it is in its vigorous exercise and life with you!

And there is this, *lastly*, which may evidence it, and it is this, when one can, upon suitable and convenient occasions of acting such a predominant sin, have their lusts set on fire, and endeavour to act it, they may question the reality of their mortification. I know the great bond which restrained many from the acting of their predominant lust, is not the apprehension of the holiness of God, but the want of secrecy. O, but if we had secrecy, we would not mourn much for those sins which we commit in secret, neither would we be much in desisting from the acting of those things unto which our lust doth lead us. It was certainly a commendable practice of one, who, being tempted unto the sin of uncleanness, did condescend to satisfy the desire of one that did pursue her, upon this condition, that he would bring her unto a place where nothing should behold her: which he attempting to do, and bringing her to the most retired imaginable place, she then most piously uttered forth these words, "Doth not God behold us?' Which words had influence upon him to whom they were spoken, that he desisted from further

prosecuting such woful and carnal designs. O, but the apprehension of the omniscience of God should keep us much to the crucifying of our predominant lust.

We shall shut up our discourse at the time, only we shall say a little unto those who are guilty of that predominant lust of covetousness, which we conceive is not only a predominant lust, but an universal lust. Sin is an universal king over the most absolute monarch, and over every one that sits upon the dunghill. And we conceive, that covetousness is one of sin's greatest princes, acting under this absolute monarch, and having many subjects. And we would only propose these things, by which you may be helped to mortify such a lust and idol. O meditate much upon the disadvantages attending this idol of covetousness! We conceive the disadvantages thereof are clearly pointed forth, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. where the apostle Paul enumerateth four disadvantages of that sin of covetousness: *First*, That it is that which maketh people err from the faith. *Secondly*, It drowneth them in destruction and perdition. *Thirdly*, It is the root of all evil. And, *lastly*, It pierceth them through with many sorrows. And for those 'whose god is the world,' we would only propose this consideration to them, which we conceive hath most influence upon such, be persuaded of this, that covetousness will abbreviate and shorten your life; as is clear, James v. 3. where this is one property of the idol of covetousness, that it 'shall eat your flesh as it were fire.' It is not an unsensible cutting short of your life, but most sensibly it will abbreviate, and bring you, in the midst of your days, to your long and everlasting home. And there is this disadvantage of it also, that covetousness is that sin which doth most directly commit a breach of the first command, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me;' as is clear, Col. iii. 5. where this sin of covetousness is called idolatry; and covetousness, which is idolatry.' And certainly, what are these things that you pursue after, but white and yellow dust, and glistering clay? The excellency of which, we conceive doth consist much (in the estimation of men) in the rarity of these things, as in any intrinsical and internal worth and excellency. And how contemptible a thing riches and the world is, doth not this speak it, that when there is abundance of these things, they become contemptible? as is clear from that word, that 'Solomon made silver as stones in the streets of Jerusalem;' which doth not only speak out this, the abundance of these things in his days, but likewise it speaketh forth this, that abundance of these things maketh them contemptible, and moveth us to undervalue them: and that which Solomon hath, Prov. xxiii. 5. 'Wilt thou set mine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make them-

selves wings, and fly away. Ere long, the world shall either leave you, or you shall leave the world.

Now we shall desire to shut up our discourse with this, that ye would seriously intend the mortification of your lusts, and that ye would be much in the employment of your lusts, and Christ. Christ hath killed the damning power of sin, and hath promised to us the spirit of mortification, by which we may kill the dominion of sin: and certainly a Christian ought to act so in dependance upon the Spirit of Christ, as if they were mere patients and instruments under his hand: but withal, we conceive, that in respect of activity and endeavour, a Christian ought to act so as if he acted independently from him, and did act all himself; but withal, in respect of self-denial, he ought so to act as if he acted nothing at all, but the Spirit acted alone in him; and therefore should cry out, after he hath done all, 'That he is but an unprofitable servant.' O that ye would be persuaded seriously to ponder and balance these things! that except ye be the ruin of your iniquities, iniquity shall certainly be your ruin, and ye know not how long it is unto that day when that decree shall be past in heaven against you,' They are joined to their idols,' let them alone. I shall only say that word which John hath in his first epistle, chap v. 21. 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols.' Amen.

SERMON VI.

GAL. v. 24. *And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

IT it is an unchangeable and unalterable decree of heaven, which cannot be repealed, 'that the wages of sin is death; and 'that which a man soweth, that shall he also reap:' though we conceive, there are many that are possessed with this imaginary delusion, that 'though they add drunkenness to thirst,' and do daily taste of that forbidden fruit, yet at last they shall obtain a place to walk in amongst those that stand by. They conceive, that there is a possible union of pure religion and undefiled, and the want of mortification; though we think, that religion, without mortification, is nothing else but the mortification of religion; and 'the crucifying of Christ afresh.' Are there not many here, who instead of 'travelling in birth until Christ be formed in them,' are travelling in birth till they bring forth iniquity, and till the image of that old man be fully framed in them. Now there is this that we would have you know, and wish that it were engraven upon the fleshly tables of our heart as with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond, that there are two tribunals

upon which God doth sit to judge; there is a tribunal of justice, where all the sentences past are pure unmixed wrath, without all temperament or mixture of mercy; and before this tribunal all flesh must once appear, and receive that dreadful sentence of eternal separation from the Majesty of the Lord; and if you do well, you must say *amen* unto the equity of the sentence; but know this for your consolation, that this is not his last word; know that justice court is but subordinate, and there is another higher, unto which we may appeal, to have that sentence of justice sweetly repealed: and is not this one mysterious depth God hath condemned, and yet leave no imputation upon the justice of God? That love should sweetly reduce decreets of justice, and declare them in law to be void and null? This is the law of love. And is not this a mystery of infinite love, that that which is an abomination for man, *to justify the wicked*, should be love and justice in God, *to justify the ungodly*. And is not this a wonder, that though *there be no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*, yet there should be many things commendable in them, and that divine love should make such an abstraction as to make a separation betwixt many things that are condemnable and condemnation? 'Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, yet mercy and truth go before it,' and cometh nearest sinners, to make ready their way, that they may speak with justice. There is this that we would have you know, that in the accomplishment of this work of mortification, of which we have been speaking at many occasions, a Christian hath that same power communicable unto him for the overcoming of his temptations, which Christ had in the overcoming of principalities and powers; this is clear, Eph. 1. 19, 20. And certainly, sometimes when a Christian doth reflect upon those living and strong corruptions that are within him, he will have much of that fear which Elisha's servant had, who cried out, 'Master, what shall we do?' But if our eyes were opened, we should see that there are more for us, than against us. Put on much of that divine generosity of Nehemiah, if we may allude unto it, in this combat of faith, 'Should such a one as I flee?' However, keep a midst betwixt discouragement and anxious misbelief. And I would only give Christians, who are indeed engaged in this holy warfare, that counsel which Ahab gave to Benhadad, 1 Kings xx. 11. 'Let not him that girdeth on his harness, boast himself as he that putteth it off.' Let confident faith be mixed with holy fear, that there may be a sweet mixture of these two; and there is this which we would speak to you, that there is a difference betwixt the grant and gift of pardon, and the inti-

mation of pardon unto a Christian; yea more, there is a difference betwixt the intimation of pardon, even for a sin mortified and repented for, and the divine application of it; this is clear by comparing 2 Sam. xii. 13. with Psalm li. where Nathan saith to David, 'thine iniquities are blotted out, and thy sin is taken away.' There is both the grant of pardon, and the intimation of it; and yet he himself, Psalm li. prayeth for the application of pardon; pardon was not applied, though it was intimated; and this would speak this to us, that we should not always conclude from the want of the sensible convictions of pardon, the want of the grant of pardon.

But now to come to that, at which we left at the last occasion, which was the extent of mortification, that a Christian ought not only to mortify original sin, but his predominant lusts also, with all the motions and occasions unto the acting of these sins. Concerning the mortification of original sin, which is here called *the flesh*, we have spoken already, and have spoken somewhat concerning the mortification of predominant lusts, and presumptuous sins: it is turned now to be an improper expression, to make mention of a predominant grace that should stand opposite to predominant lusts. I would only say this, that under the law there is no express mention made for any sacrifice for presumptuous sins, unto which the apostle doth allude, Heb. x. 26. 'If a man sin wilfully after he hath received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.' And certainly, this may make us astonished to entertain our predominant sins, and our presumptuous iniquities, to entertain them so, as not to debate and wrestle with them; for they turn not unto presumptuous sins, except we go such a length; therefore we should be much in presenting that supplication, Psalm xix. 13. 'Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me.'

Now that which we shall speak to first, shall be this, what are the most effectual and spiritual means by which a Christian may be helped to the mortifying of his predominant lusts? And before we speak of them, we shall only say this, that this generation desireth rather to know what to do, than to do and practise what they know; we think to win to heaven by knowledge, though we confess, we will not win to heaven without it, yet there is more requisite in a Christian.

The *first* way how a Christian will be helped to mortify his predominant lusts, is this, for a Christian to be much in the exercise of secret prayer. And I should say this, he is a blessed Christian, who ever won to the mortification of the least strength of a lust by public prayer, whether more public, or in families,

or with society. Pride and self-seeking is that caterpillar and worm that eats up the fruit of these addresses unto God; but if you were much in secret prayer, it would be a compendious way to attain to the mortification of your lusts, that when a messenger of Satan buffets you, ye may go to the throne thrice, and beseech the Lord, that this evil may depart from you. This is clear, not only from Eph. vi. 18. where, amongst all the rest of the spiritual armour of a Christian, prayer is made mention of, 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication;' but it is clear also from James v. 13. 'Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.' And 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8. the words that we were speaking just now. O! whither is that 'washing of our bed with tears,' and that presenting of supplications 'with sighs and groans that cannot be expressed,' now gone? There are few Christians but can make language of their grief, whose grief of heart never goes to such a length, as they may cry out, 'I am so troubled that I cannot speak.' He were indeed a phœnix of this time, who could, without lying to the Holy Ghost, say, 'That his bones were waxing old, through his roaring all the day.' And we would only say to such, that are not endeavouring after this, 'You shall go down to your graves, having your bones full of the sins of your youth.'

There is this *second* mean that I would speak to, that a Christian would be much in the exercise of the grace of watchfulness. This is clear from Luke xxi. 36. and from Matth. xxvi. 41. 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.' And, certainly, watchfulness is a most requisite piece of armour, that 'after we have done all, we may stand;' not only because watchfulness is that which discovereth unto a Christian his weakness and inability; for a Christian to be convinced of this, it is his strength; as is clear from 2 Cor. x. 11. 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' This is a paradox to nature, but no mystery to grace: but also, because watchfulness is a most effectual mean to discover to a Christian the subtilty and profound deceitfulness of his adversaries, which maketh him to be much in watching over his own heart. Watchfulness, likewise, is that grace, which discovereth unto a Christian the formal and remiss actings of grace in this precious combat. When faith beginneth to die, and hope beginneth to languish, and love and zeal begin to wax cold, then watchfulness giveth warning to prayer, that it may go to seek strength for those that were languishing. As likewise, watchfulness is requisite, because it discovereth unto a Christian the first motions of his adversaries, and when first he beginneth to stir, which, no doubt, is a great advantage. And more, watchfulness discovereth unto a Christian, that advantage

which he hath over his lusts, which doth exceedingly encourage him to go on in this spiritual warfare.

There is this, *thirdly*, which is requisite, that a Christian would be much in the meditation upon the sufferings, death, and love of Jesus Christ. I know not (to a tender Christian) a more effectual mean to mortify his affections and lusts, than this; this is clear that it is so, not only from 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. where Paul saith, 'The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that we should henceforth no more live to ourselves.' And Peter presseth this, 1 Peter i. 18. compared with v. 16. 'Be ye holy, as he is holy;' and he subjoineth the reason of it, 'For ye are bought with a price,' even with the incorruptible blood of Jesus Christ. And 1 Peter iv. 1, 2. he presseth the doctrine of mortification from this, that Christ was crucified in the flesh. And it is clear from Psalm xxvi. 3. where the great argument which persuaded David to pursue after sincerity, was this, 'For thy loving kindness is before mine eyes.' And is not this a sweet portraiture, always to contemplate and behold, to look upon love, 'until ye be changed into that same image, from glory to glory?' And certainly, Christ's death and love must have a most effectual influence upon this: can one read these words, 'He sweat drops of blood?' And that word, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me?' Can you read these words, and not be provoked to hate sin with a perfect hatred? Can ye love that which crucified Christ, and brought him so low? If such a supposition had been possible, that all that were sinners had been standing round about the cross, in the day that Christ was hanged up betwixt heaven and earth, in the day that his precious body was dropping down drops of blood, might not ye have said, "O! what a thing must "that be, which we call sin, that hath brought him so low?" And may not the reflex thoughts upon the love of Christ provoke you to this, that if Christ hath so far condescended unto you, ought ye not to please him, and give obedience to his commandments? Who would dispute the commands of such a one? And it is certain, that if we would meditate on these things till we wondered, and wonder till we loved, no doubt it should persuade you to be endeavouring the mortification of your lusts. Christ's death had not only a moral influence, (of which we have spoken) but it hath a physical influence also upon the mortification of sin: For 'we are bought, (saith the apostle Peter, 1 Pet. i. 18.) with a price, from our vain conversation.' Christ hath crucified the damning power of sin, and hath purchased this gift, the spirit of sanctification, to crucify the dominion of sin.

There is this, *fourthly*, which is requisite, that a Christian, under debates with lusts, be much in the exercise of the grace of

faith. It is a most sensible and unknown help to our apprehension: we think faith is a help, when all things are desperate; and therefore we judge prayer a more suitable help to sense and apprehension: therefore a Christian, under the prevailing of his corruptions, will be more in the employment of the grace of prayer, than in the employment of the grace of faith: though we may say this to the advantage of the grace of faith, that it hath a most effectual and most divine influence for the crucifying of lusts: if so we may speak, faith is that, that cometh nearest himself; for faith (as it is spoken of it) hath a kind of omnipotency, as it is said, 'All things are possible for those that believe.' Now this is clear, not only from 1 John v. 4. 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith:' but it is clear also from Eph. vi. 16. 'Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.' And certainly, had we so much faith 'as a grain of mustard seed,' we might say to every mountain that is in our way, 'Be removed and cast into the midst of the sea, and it should obey us.' We shall clear the influence of faith in the mortifying of corruption, not only in this, that the grace of faith discovereth unto a Christian, that super-eminent and precious excellency of Jesus Christ, at the appearance of which, the glory and lustre of our idols do disappear. We think, our idols are like stars, that in the night do appear and seem beautiful creatures; but when once that Sun, even 'the Sun of righteousness', doth arise, then their glory is not seen, neither can they be beheld. Saw you never such a sight of him, that constrained you to cry out, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' If such a supposition were possible, that any idol should get entrance above, it should get no entertainment there, for they are upheld by an infinite strength that cannot fail. As likewise, the influence of faith may be cleared in this, that it is that grace that doth lay hold upon the promises, by which, and through which, strength from the head is conveyed unto the combatant. As, for example, when a believer is wrestling with his lusts, faith layeth hold upon the promise of help, and by it layeth hold on Jesus Christ, who is the Promiser. As likewise, the influence of faith may be cleared in this, faith is that grace which discovereth to a Christian 'that crown and recompence of reward,' one sight and view of which maketh love and zeal take fire, and maketh them to 'tread upon the high places of the earth,' that when the archers shoot at them, and doth grievously wound them, yet their bow doth abide in its strength.

There is this mean likewise, by which a Christian would mortify his predominant lusts, and it is this, that he would be much in entertaining the grace of tenderness; Joseph-like to cry out,

when temptation doth assail him, 'Shall I do this, and sin against God?' I am persuaded, that sin not resisted in its motions, doth produce hardness: and likewise, we may say, that sin resisted in its beginnings, doth bring forth the grace of tenderness in a most effectual and eminent way.

And there is this mean likewise, which is requisite, that a Christian be much in the apprehension of death, judgment and eternity: these three much meditated upon, would make us afraid to sin. I think, a Christian never walketh as he ought, till he walk so, as if each moment next to that wherein he liveth, he had the expectation of appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ. O! but it would be a sad dispensation to many, to have this day a summons without continuation of days, to appear before that dreadful and terrible tribunal of Jesus Christ, when the books shall be opened, wherein your wanderings are written, and the books of your conscience shall be opened, that shall say Amen to every thing that is recorded within the volume of these books; this is clear from Acts xvii. 30, 31. 'He hath commanded all men every where to repent;' and the argument enforcing it is, 'Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world by that man Jesus Christ.' As likewise it is clear in Eccles. xi 9, where Solomon presseth, by way of holy irony, (for so the scope is) "Young men not to take their pleasures in the morning of their time, because for all these things God will bring them into judgment." And we wish that the *memento* which did always walk with a holy man, might walk with you and sound in your ears, 'Awake, and come to judgment; that it may be that which may regulate your walk. I shall not say much, but beware to entertain your lusts, lest judgment overtake you, the stones of the wall of this house shall bear witness against you in the day of the Lord, that ye have been invited to flee from the wrath to come, and have refused the precious offers of a crucified Saviour. We would obtest and beseech you, that if there be a heaven, if there be a God, if there be an eternity, which are most certain and infallible; if there be a hell, and everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord, and if you have precious and immortal souls, that ye would tender your own salvation, and speak much of Peter's divinity; 'Pity yourselves,' for ye are destroying yourselves through the want of knowledge: and if we may say it, hell is enlarging itself wide for the receiving of many of the inhabitants of this place, and of many that live in this generation, who are destitute and void of the grace of the living God.

Now that which, *secondly*, we shall speak to, shall be this, what are the evidences and tokens of this, when lust hath dominion

over one! And we shall shortly point out the evidences of lust when it hath dominion. And we conceive this, *first*, may evidence it, when one wins to such a length, as they can commit sin with delight, and with greediness; when it is a pleasure to them to go after the heart of their detestable things, then sin hath dominion over one; as it is clear, sin hath dominion over those made mention of, 2 Pet. ii. 13. "They that count it pleasure to riot in the day time, and are sporting themselves with their own deceivings:" Such fools as Solomon speaketh of, 'making a mock at sin.' And likewise it is clear of these made mention of, Eph. iv. 19. 'They commit iniquity with greediness.' And as the prophet speaketh in another place, 'Their hearts are mad upon idols.'

There is this, *secondly*, which may evidence it, and it is this, when one sinneth with his predominant lust without conviction, or if they be convinced, their convictions do suddenly evanish; like those made mention of, Jer. vi. 15. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush." They had won to such a length in impiety, that not only they would not do it, but they could not do it. And that same is made mention of, Jer. viii. 12. It is clear likewise from Jer. iii. 3. 'Thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.' And from Prov. xxx. 20. where the adulterous woman saith, 'That she hath done no wickedness.' When you are brought to such a length of impiety, then know, that you have yielded yourselves servants unto unrighteousness for a time.

There is this, *thirdly*, which may evidence it, and it is this, when one can commit iniquity upon small temptations, yea, upon none at all: this did prove, that that sin of adultery had some dominion over David, when he did commit it upon so small or no temptation; for this is brought in to aggravate it, 2 Sam. xii. 8. "I give thee thy master's wives unto thy bosom:" and it is most emphatically aggravated, ver. 2, 3. one poor man should have had one ewe-lamb, and yet he had so many, and that yet he should pursue after that. And most clearly from Isa. v. 18. "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as with a cart rope:" the meaning of these words we conceive to be this, that they did most violently, without any allurement or enticement, pursue after the hearts of their detestable things. Certainly, those may suspect themselves, that, upon the first presentation of an idol, they presently bow down their heads, and worship it.

There is this likewise, which may evidence it, and it is this, when one, notwithstanding of the convictions of the omniscience of God that doth behold them, will commit such an ini-

quity; no doubt, then sin is brought unto a most damnable and most attrocious height: then sin had dominion over Er, Gen. xxxviii. 7. 'He did evil in the sight of the Lord:' the meaning of which we conceive to be this, that he did the evil notwithstanding he was convinced of the omniscience and all-seeing eye of God. And it is recorded of Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 20. 'He sold himself to work evil in the sight of the Lord;' when notwithstanding he knew that he had 'seven eyes that run to and fro through the earth,' yet he did act these abominations.

And there is this, *lastly*, that doth evidence it, when one doth sin with much deliberation and advice; they are not over-haled by their temptations and lusts, and they sit down in counsel, to consult how such a thing may be effectuated: then had iniquity dominion over those that are made mention of, Micah ii. 1. 'Woe to them that devise iniquity upon their beds;' that sit down deliberately in the silent seasons of the night, to contrive the mischievous plots of their hearts. And we would only say to such, read the third and fourth verses of that chapter, where God saith, in a sweet and just opposition, in regard their devising of iniquity, 'Behold (saith he) I will devise against this people. God will deliberately, and with much indignation, punish those that sin deliberately; and this is clear from Jer. xviii. 12.

Now we shall shut up our discourse at this time, only we would speak a little unto this, why God doth sometimes think fit to expose his own unto some dominion of their lusts? It was a notable and most true saying of a heathen, "As many vices, "as many masters;" for every lust is a master: and we may say, every lust hath a servant, and some hath ten thousand waiting on. And we conceive, when a Christian beginneth to establish his own righteousness, then he is in hazard to be given up for a time unto the dominion of his sin; this is clear, Ezek. xxxiii. 15. 'If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity.' And there may be this reason of it, that they may know to distinguish betwixt the yoke of Christ, and the yoke and bondage of sin, as it is pointed at, Deut. xxviii. 47. 48. And we conceive, this may be a reason of it, because God intendeth to magnify the glory of his unsearchable grace, by delivering them from the door of the pit, when this song shall be sung. 'This my son was dead, and is alive; was lost and is found:' this is the song of restoring grace, after grace hath once prevented the Christian.

Now we will desire you seriously to intend this precious work of mortification; the most part of us are idol-Christians, we have hands, and we do nothing; we have eyes, and we see not; and we have feet, and we walk not: and certainly that practice and maxim of Machiavel is much practised amongst us. He

thought it was advantageous to have the possession of religion, and of virtue, but he thought it dangerous to have the reality of religion. There are many that desire to be clothed with the coat of Christ, that never desired conformity with Christ in the inward man. And we think, if Christ were to come down from heaven, he might preach this to many of us, 'Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?' There are many that, I am sure, have a lower spirit than Judas, that would sell Christ at a lower rate than thirty pieces of silver. O! eternity, eternity, 'What shall you do in the day of desolation, when your visitation shall come from afar? where shall you flee for help? and where shall you leave your glory?' I shall shut up all that I have to say, with this, 'The wrath of that living, but contemptible stone, that was cut out of the mountains, shall be more intolerable than the weight of mountains and hills;' therefore the reprobates rather choose to be under the weight of hills and mountains, than to be under the weight of this living corner-stone, but so much despised. Will you not embrace him? May not angels laugh at your folly, and have you in holy derision? The triumph is above, and it is not long before his own shall cry out, 'It is finished.' And, no doubt, if we were much in the exercise of faith, we should easily accomplish this warfare: we may call faith, Eliezer, of whom it is reported, 'That he did so pursue his enemies, that the people returned to gather up the spoils.' Love, prayer, and joy, will eternally sit down and reap the sweet fruits of the victory of faith. Now to him that can make you overcome through the blood of the Lamb, and the word of your testimony, we desire to give praise.

SERMON VII.

GAL. v. 24. *And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

IT was a divine sentence of that master of experiences, that 'love covereth a multitude of sins;' we may say, that precious and infinite love that Christ hath had to sinners, 'hath covered a multitude of sins;' though this is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation, that the most part of us hath not come that length in religion which the publicans and sinners did attain to, which is, 'To love those that love them.' Doth not Christ, in his engraving of his love to sinners in letters of blood, call for this at our hand, that we should devote ourselves wholly to him? But we confess, such is that desperate enmity and deceitfulness of the hearts of all flesh, that if all who have been partakers of

the divine nature, or shall be partakers of it, had but one heart to conduct them to heaven, they would misguide it in the way; it being the matchless and incommunicable prerogative of the *Captain of our salvation*, to guide many sons and daughters to glory. I think, if there were a description to be given of the most part of us, we must give that which is in Prov. vi. 13. 'He speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers.' And the great lesson that he would teach with our feet, and preach with our hands, would be iniquity, formality, and distance from God. And I would have you, who are expectants of heaven, and have some small hope of being eternally with him, to be much in this precious work of mortification. There are some so habituated to sin, if God do not prevent them, the last act they shall commit in this stage of the world, shall be an act of iniquity, and they shall breathe out their last, in departing from that invisible Majesty. There are some, that though they live seventy years, they shall not have this to say, of one day of all their life, that they have devoted and given to God. Mortification is a mystery to our knowledge, but much more a mystery to our practice: it is a wonder that many of us are not distracted, and that much of Cain's divinity doth not possess us, That 'whosoever shall find us by the way, shall kill us.' However, unto those who make any conscience of this duty, we would say these two things; 1st, Ye may yield unto the promises and assertions of misbelief, which they draw from the dominion of your sin over you, but deny the conclusions of misbelief. This was the practice of David, Psalm lxv. 3. there is the assertion of misbelief in the first words, 'Iniquities prevail against me;' but he denies that conclusion which we draw from it, *that we are reprobates*; but faith doth sweetly subjoin, 'As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.' This is bad logic, to deny the conclusion: but precious divinity. And, 2dly, we would say this to you, that ye may, with a great deal of liberty, make use of the dominion of your iniquity, as an argument to plead with God for pardon, according to that famous prayer of David, Psalm xxv. 11. 'For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity: for it is great.' And we would say, likewise, that God maketh use of the iniquities of the children of men, as an argument to provoke himself unto mercy, and even those iniquities, which before he hath made use of as an argument of justice. It is strange to parallel and compare these two places, Gen. vi. 5, with Gen. viii. 21. where the reason that God giveth of the destruction of the world, is this, 'Because that every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man, is only evil continually;' and yet, chap. viii. 21. he giveth this as a ground why he would

curse the world no more for man's sake, 'Because, saith he, the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.'

Now we told you at the last occasion we spoke on these words, when we were speaking upon the *second* thing of mortification, which was the extent of it, that a Christian should not only mortify original sin, which is here called the *flesh*, but likewise, he should mortify his predominant idols, which are here called *the affections;* and of these two we have spoken. There is this likewise in the extent of mortification, that a Christian should mortify the first motions and temptations unto sin, which are here called *lusts*. And for clearing what we shall speak unto this, we conceive that the first motions of sin do comprehend these two: 1*st*, That a Christian should study to mortify the first tetmpations he meets with unto acting or embracing of any particular lust. And, 2*dly*, that a Christian should study to avoid all appearance of evil, by which he may be brought to the actings of that sin. We shall not stand long to prove, that it is the duty of a Christian to do the first; it is clear not only from James iv. 7. where we are commanded *to resist the devil*, which comprehendeth even the resisting of the first motions of sin; as likewise, from 1 Pet. v. 9. 'Whom resist stedfast in the faith:' but likewise, it is clear from the practice of David, Psalm lvi. 3. where, when misbelief began to stir, he put faith in exercise, 'What time, saith he, I am afraid, I will trust in thee.' And it is clear from the practice of Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8. where there was a 'messenger of Satan given to buffet him, he went and besought the Lord thrice.' Neither shall we stand to prove, that it is the duty of a Christian to flee the appearance of evil. It is clear, not only from Deut. xii. 30. where it is said, 'Thou shalt not enquire how the nations serve their gods.' Ye may suppose there was no iniquity in this enquiry, yet because it was the appearance of evil, God doth forbid it; as likewise from Deut. xxv. 13, 14. 'Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small.' It might be supposed, that the having of these things, when not used, was not unlawful, but the very having of them, because it was an appearance of evil, it was desired to be eschewed. And that remarkable place, Prov. v. 8. 'Come not nigh the door of her house,' who is a whore. And that in Deut. xii. 3. where the people are commanded even to forget the names of idols. And from Jude ver. 23. 'To hate the garment spotted with the flesh.' And Deut. xvi. 19. where it is forbidden for *a judge to take a gift;* not that there is iniquity in this, but because it is an appearance of evil, lest he should pervert judgment, it is forbidden.

Now that which first we shall speak to upon this, that a Christian should flee the first motions and appearances of sin, shall be this, to propose some considerations unto you, that you may enforce this duty more.

The *first* consideration that we propose, is this, that iniquity, when it is resisted in its first motions, is most easily conquered and overcome; when sin is killed in its birth, it is killed with the greatest facility and easiness: and certainly, when we delay the mortifying of our lusts, and resist not the devil, it is no wonder than we are led captive by the hand of our iniquities. It was an ancient saying, worthy to be practised, resist the beginning of evil, for the remedy is ever more difficult in the close, than in the beginning. However, we would give Christians these two directions for this consideration: *First*, After by the power of grace ye have overcome the first motions of sin, do not give over your watch, nor sit down in carnal confidence, for he will again assail you, even after you have overcome. It is a remarkable word that is annexed to the close of Christ's temptations, Luke iv. 13. where, after Satan was foiled most remarkably, it is said, 'he departed from him for a season;' he had a mind to return, though he was overcome. *Secondly*, We say this, that most ordinarily the resisting of the motions of sin, and overcoming of them, if they be not improven with humility, it is the forerunner of some sad stroke from the hand of the Lord.

There is this *second* consideration that we would propose for inviting of you to resist the first motions of sin, and it is this, a Christian that maketh conscience of this duty, ordinarily he is blessed with most divine and precious enjoyments of Jesus Christ: let a Christian try this by experience, and when first sin doth assail them, if they will make conscience to resist it, the dew of heaven shall come down, and lie upon their branch, that their glory may be fresh in them, and they shall be constrained to set up an Ebenezer unto God, and to cry out, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us;' this is clear, Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye thro' the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;' and it is clear likewise from Rev. ii. 17. where, to the man that is in the way of overcoming. 'Christ will give him the hidden manna.' And certainly, we think, if we may make allusion to these words, that curse is accomplished in these days, 'I will make the heavens brass, and the earth iron.' There are some upon whom it hath not rained these three years and six months, but are become as the bottles in the smoke, the marrow of whose bones is consumed.

There is this *third* consideration that we would propose, and it is this, that the resisting of the motions and first stirrings of corruption, is the way to get the soul under a divine impression

of the sinfulness of sin. When was it that the apostle Paul cried out, 'O wretched man that I am?' Was it not when there was a law in his mind, wrestling against the law of his members? When he was the greatest wrestler, then did sin appear out of measure sinful unto him. I confess, that distinction which papists do so much adore, of venial and mortal sins, I think Christians in their practice do much make use of. Are there not many sins, which ye account venial, and writeth this name upon their forehead, this is a Zoar, a little thing, and desire to be pardoned when ye bow your knee in the house of Rimmon, if ye go no further? But certainly, the way to bring the soul to divine loathing of all sin, is to be resisting the first motions of it.

There is this *fourth* consideration, that resisting of the first motions of sin, is that which keeps the grace of faith much in exercise, especially in an hour of trial and temptation. I think there is nothing that will darken a Christian's evidence so much as this, the conviction of this, that there was never a sin did assail them that was resisted in its first motions and stirrings. I confess, I think a bad conscience, it is the mother of misbelief, which the apostle doth clearly point at, 1 Tim. iii. 9. 'Holding (saith he) the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.' As if he would have said, that divine and precious guest, faith, can lodge in no dwelling but in a pure and undefiled conscience. And to make this clear, that the resisting of the motions and first stirrings of sin have influence to preserve faith in exercise, see Rev. ii. 17. 'To him that overcometh,' that is in the way of overcoming, 'I will give him a new name;' he shall know that his name is written in these precious records of heaven, and that before the morning star did sing for joy, ere ever the corner-stone of the world was laid, he was engraven upon the heart of precious ones in indelible letters which cannot be blotted out. As also it is clear from Rom. vii. 1. compared with the 8th verse. When was it that Paul cried out, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus?' Was it not then, when he was wrestling against his corruptions?

And there is this *last* consideration, which we shall propose to enforce this duty, and it is this, that not resisting sin in its first motions, do ordinarily create and bring to pass much hardness and stupidity of heart, when we silence our convictions with laziness, and answer our reprover with this, 'I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?' I shall say to such, it is a bad omen and sign that God is upon his way, to cease to be such as a reprover unto you. I confess, there is a difference betwixt sinning against light, and sinning with light: and we conceive, that there are many guilty of the one, that are not guilty of the

other. However, if ever ye shall come this length, as when temptation doth assail you, to make a covenant of peace and agreement with it, ye may expect, if you go to heaven, you shall be safe, but so as by fire. And we confess, there are some whose consciences may bear them record, that they never knew what it was to resist the first motions and stirrings of corruption. It is a lesson of so high a nature, that it would need explication unto them. And think ye, that ye can attain unto that living and precious hope, who never knew how to wrestle with sin, and with your corruptions? Is such a delusion as this among you, that ye reign, though ye fight not; and triumph, though ye contend not? Ye may reign, to your own apprehension, as kings without Christ this way; but ye shall never reign as kings with him, if ye do not study to mortify your lusts.

That which, *secondly*, we shall speak upon this, shall be this, what is the reason that Christians do not resist sin in its first motions and stirrings of sin within them? And we conceive, that it doth either proceed from this, that Christians are not much in the exercise of the grace of watchfulness. I think, temptations seize oft-times upon a Christian's affections, before they be aware; hence it is, that when the apostle Peter is prescribing this direction of resisting the motions of sin, he requireth this as an antecedent duty, that they would be watchful, 1. Peter v. 8. 9. 'Be vigilant,' and then, 'resist him, stedfast in the faith.' When once a Christian hath given over his watch, he is a prey unto his lusts: we may certainly say of him, that he is a city broken down, and without walls, that doth not exercise the grace of watchfulness. Or else it doth proceed from this, that Christians are not in a divine and spiritual frame to resist temptations when they are first assailed with them. We confess, our spirits oft-times are so loaded with the pleasures of the world, and are so much taken up with the passing delights of a transient world, that when temptations do come, we do easily condescend to embrace them: hence it is, that the apostle James, when he is pressing this exhortation upon these to whom he writeth, 'resist the devil,' he subjoineth this in the 8th verse as a concomitant duty, 'Draw nigh to God:' as if he would have said, "If temptations "find you at a distance from God, then ye may cry out, have "pity on me:" for ye are a prey, if ye be not found within sight of him, and if your hearts do not study to walk in the sight of his precious face. As likewise, Peter doth prescribe this, 1 Pet. v. 8. 9. 'Be sober, and then, resist him stedfast in the faith:' and more clearly it is pointed at, Matth. xxvi. 41. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." And I would only say this unto you, it is a most high and divine walk always to be

living within the sight of God, that when you go down to the grave, ye may have this to say, I am now to change my place, but not to change my company; heaven may be to you but a precious passing and transition into a more constant and immediate enjoyment of God: or else, it doth proceed from this, that Christians, when they are first assailed with the motions and stirrings of corruptions, they cannot do violence to their own flesh. I confess, these two idols, which are dependent one upon another, that idol of self, and that idol of ease, they are the cut-throats of a Christian's diligence, and are the great occasion why we do not overcome, through the word of our testimony, and by the blood of the Lamb: think ye that it is an easy thing to overcome temptations? I confess those that are not acquainted with it, may probably say it; but this is certain, 'that such kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer.' It cost Christ much toil to liberate you from the guilt of sin; and it shall cost you much toil, to liberate yourselves from the filth of sin. And there is this, *lastly*, from which it proceeds, that Christians do not mortify sin in its first stirrings and motions, because they are not living under an impression of the sinfulness of sin. We conceive, that oft-times when temptations do assail us, we think, 'departing from God a dispensible evil, and that which easily we may obtain pardon for. I would prescribe that unto you, as one of the greatest mysteries of Christianity, and blessed, blessed is he eternally that hath win to it, and it is this, to be living constantly under a divine impression of the sinfulness of sin, that ye may take it up in its nature and in its effects. I think, if one should come from the dead, having the chains of everlasting wrath wreathed about his feet, and the shackles of the fury of the Lord wreathed about his hands, and should preach to you concerning the nature of sin, and how damnable a thing it is, there are many who would not take much heed to such doctrine.

Now that which, *thirdly*, we proposed to speak to from these words was, the difficulty to attain to mortification, which we conceive was held forth under that word, *crucify;* which doth import, that mortification is a longsome work, as crucifying was a longsome death: as likewise, it doth import, that mortification was a painful work, as crucifying was one of the most painful deaths; and likewise, it holdeth forth the intensive nature of mortification, that a Christian should study not to be content until he should kill corruption. And concerning these three we shall speak together; and we shall point out the difficulty of attaining to mortification in these things, *first*. Is there not this which points out the difficulty of it, that there is a woful unity

of affection betwixt us and our lusts, they are as dear to us as the right eye, and our right hand and right foot? And, I confess, to convince you of that unity that is betwixt you and your lusts, I think that expression which ordinarily ye use when one is reproving you for your passion, or for your swearing, may suffice; ye will answer, what aileth you at me? Which doth speak this, that you say, your lusts and you are one. And I confess, Paul hath an expression like this, Rom. vii. 18. 'I know (saith he) that in me dwelleth no good thing.' There are two *me's* in a Christian, there is a spiritual and refined *me*, there is a carnal and a wicked *me*, as Paul doth distinguish them in that verse. 'I know (saith he) that in me dwelleth no good thing:' and he subjoineth, 'For to will is present with me', which is one good thing. And we confess, that word is accomplished in *me*, 'They are joined to their idols, let them alone.'

There is that, *secondly*, which pointeth out the difficulty of mortification, and it is this, the strength of those lusts that are within us. We think the scripture is so abundant in pointing out the strength of sin, that we need not speak much to it: there is that expression, Rom. viii. 2. which is a most strange word; it is there called 'the law of sin and death.' As it were, sin pleads for as much subjection from us, as if we were tried by law to obey it: and in that verse, there is a sweet contrariety of laws. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." If so we may speak, there is, in a manner, one decree and statute of heaven, declaring another to be null; for it was a law in heaven, that we should be under death, because we were under sin. But behold, here is a posterior law that doth sweetly reduce this prior law, and it is 'the law of the spirit of life.' As likewise, that expression pointeth out the strength of corruption, which is in 2 Cor. x. 4. where he saith, we are to fight for 'the pulling down of strong holds;' as it were, sin fortifieth itself within our bosom: and, we confess, if this were believed, we should study to mortify our corruptions with a great deal of more pains and constancy. There is this likewise which pointeth it out, and it is, the deceitfulness of our lusts, and the subtilty which they vent in their deceiving of us; which is clear from that expression, James i. 14. 'When a man, saith he, is drawn away, and enticed of his own lusts.' The word there rendered *enticed*, is taken from the fishers, who deceive the silly fishes with an apparent bait of pleasure. We confess, these two are the great obstructions of a Christian's progress to heaven, there are temptations from fear, and there are temptations from advantage; which two, if they were removed, we might with greater facility overcome our

lusts, and sing a song of triumph over our idols. Oft-times that expression is recorded, *deceitfulness of sin.* We confess, if this were believed, we would use a more divine and holy prudence lest we should be ensnared. And to shut up our discourse upon mortification, upon which we have been speaking so long, we shall only speak a little to obviate any mistake that may be about the difficulty of any mortification, which shall include that which we intend to speak upon, which was the certainty of overcoming.

And that which, *first*, we would say unto you is this, be persuaded of this, that there is more divine satisfaction in the resisting of your lusts, and wrestling against them, than there is in the actual fruition of them all. That word of Solomon's, 'Stolen waters are sweet,' saith the adulterous woman, but at last they shall be convinced of the contrary. And that word which he speaketh, 'Bread of deceit is pleasant to the mouth, but he knoweth not that the dead are there,' &c. And we think the apostle sweetly chideth the Romans concerning this thing, 'What fruit have ye of these things, whereof ye are now ashamed? It is sad to think upon that woful disappointment that many shall meet with.

There is this which we would likewise say, that there is a divine certainty of a Christian's overcoming, let the difficulties be never so many: and, O beloved in the Lord! are not these glad tidings from a far country, and may be as cold waters to a thirsty man's soul, that a Christian shall once overcome? And, I confess, there are these four things that speak the certainty of a Christian's overcoming, 1. The faithfulness and the love of Jesus Christ is laid in pawn for our overcoming; which is clear from that, John vi. 39. 'And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.' And we confess, this is certain, it is more of Christ's concernment, that a believer should overcome, than it is of his own. O! what songs to the faithfulness of Christ, what songs to his love shall be sung that day, when the precious troops of his saints shall return from the day of judgment, and that general infare shall be of all those that have been begotten unto a lively hope, when they shall convey Christ home, through the ports of the New Jerusalem, every one having the harp of God in his hand, and shall cry out, 'Hallelujah, hallelujah, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.' That song shall have no period, though it have a beginning

There is this likewise, which pointeth forth their certainty of overcoming; Christ hath overcome, and therefore a Christian

shall overcome. It was the sweet divinity of the apostle Paul, Heb. ii. 9, 10. there is a promise, saith he, that all things shall be put under our feet; but we see not that promise accomplished, saith he: I see one thing accomplished, which is a pledge of it, I see 'Jesus Christ, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and with Majesty.' Christ is in heaven, and he must be there. And that word, John xvi. 33. 'Be of good cheer,' saith he, 'for I have overcome the world;' which is a pledge and certain token that ye shall once overcome.

There is this likewise, which pointeth forth their certainty of overcoming, that that same power which was exercised in bringing Christ from death, and in making him to overcome principalities and powers, is communicated to believers, to make them overcome; as is clear from Eph. i. 19, 20. where it is said, 'That power that wrought mightily in Christ, to raise him from the dead, doth also work in those that believe.' O Christians! heirs of the grace of life, believe this, that Omnipotency is engaged on your behalf; and have you not learned the first point of the creed, That *there is nothing impossible to God?* And so when you are constrained sometimes to cry out, 'Who shall stand before the children of Anak?' Content yourselves with this, that there is nothing too hard for him.

And there is this, *lastly*, which points it out, that divine and invisible knot of union that is betwixt Christ and his members, is Christ above? The members must follow. For ye know, though Christ be the fulness of the saints, yet the saints are the fulness of Christ; there is a mutual fulfilling and accomplishing each one of another; know ye not that word, 'That where I am, there they may be also?' I think, of all the words that Christ ever spoke to the Father, that word was the most imperious and commanding-like word, which he hath, John xvii. 24, 'I will, saith he, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.' It was not his prayer which came that length, he willed it, and would not be contradicted; and certainly, there is nothing that may comfort you in the hour of trial so much as this, Christ is upon his way to relieve you, and ye are upon your way of overcoming. And I shall only say that word, which ought to be your practice, 1 John v. 18. 'Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not; and that wicked one toucheth him not?' that ordinary expression which you have, you should not rub clothes with him, nor touch him. And to those that are walking in the broad paths of sin, I shall only speak that to you, which is, Job xxi. 20. 'His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty.' Your eyes and your taste shall be satisfied: and that word, which is verse 30. 'He shall be re-

served to the day of destruction;' or as the words in the original, 'He shall be reserved to the day of wrath;' as it were there shall be a combination of wrath and justice that shall seize upon you. Now to him who is upon his way, who shall come, and will not tarry, whose reward is with him, we desire to give praise.

SERMON VIII.

GAL. v. 24. *And they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

CHRISTIANITY doth consist in a blessed exchange of affections; a soul-dying in its affections and respects to all things that are here below, and living and advancing in its desires towards him, who is that blessed and universal Good. It ought to be that arch-plot, and great design, that Christians ought to promove, to attain to that original unity, which once was in man's affections toward God. O! what blessedness did Adam enjoy, while he did stand in that estate wherein he was created; he having a blessed harmony of all his affections towards God; and likewise, there being a most divine correspondence and blessed familiarity betwixt heaven and earth, betwixt him that sitteth on the throne, and the foot stool; but that was most eminently verified, that 'man being in honour did not abide.' O! what anxious and perplexing thoughts had poor Adam, no doubt, some hours after his fall, when he did reflect upon that which was once his condition, and did compare it with that which was now his lot: might he not take up that lamentation over himself, 'Man in his best estate is altogether vanity?' And likewise he might have that proverb taken up of himself, 'How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning? Now, man by losing that blessed unity that was in his affections, hath contracted a woful and infinite diversity in his affections towards these things that are here below: so that those affections which did once sweetly run in one channel toward God, are now divided and separated in many channels, toward those things that are below him: and there is nothing beneath the sun that leadeth captive so many of our desires, as the *world:* therefore it is your advantage to be crucified to the world, and to have the world crucified to you; that you may discover that endless vanity, and unspeakable vexation of spirit, that is in all things that are here. The world is a perfect compend and complete epitome of all misery: God himself is that compend of all blessedness; so that there is nothing that we can take up under this, but it is most eminently in him. It is a duty which is much undervalued

in these days, Christians to be promoving in that blessed work of having themselves crucified to the world, and having the world crucified to them. O! how suitable is it for those who are heirs and expectants of that blessed hope, and everlasting enjoyment of being with God, who is the Judge of all flesh, and with Jesus Christ, who is the Mediator of the new covenant, and with the innumerable company of holy angels, and to be made heirs and co-heirs with Jesus Christ. Is it not below you to be much taken up in your vain and anxious pursuits after these things that are below? The objects of the desires of your immortal spirits ought to be more high than things below, and ought to be more divine than things human; your affections ought to 'be ascending as pillars of smoke,' and ye should be breathing after that blessed day, when there shall be a confinement of all your affections on him. We have at some occasions spoken unto you of the grace of humility, and of the grace of love, the one teaching us to undervalue ourselves, the other teacheth us to value God. And had you been much taken up in the spiritual and lively exercise of those, there should not have been much difficulty to persuade you at this time. We shall not insist long in telling you what mortification is, it is a constant and blessed endeavour of the Christian, to remove out of his way all these impediments that do interrupt the exercise of love. As likewise, it is that which entertaineth a constant and perpetual antipathy, and holy indignation against every thing, through which his conformity with God, and that perfect likeness and similitude with his Maker, might be in any way impaired. 2. Mortification doth not consist in those unconstant and unequal exercises of mortifying our lusts, it consists not in these violent flashes of holy zeal and indignation against our iniquities; for though that indignation be violent for its time, yet it doth quickly evanish and pass away: but that grace of mortification must be a constant and daily exercise; we will solace ourselves in the chambers of our imagery, by behold our idols pourtrayed upon the wall; we will study to receive satisfaction in our apprehensions, when we cannot receive satisfaction in the actual fruition of them: such is likewise the woful desperateness of the heart of the children of men, that when God had put a worm to the root of that gourd, under the shadow of which we used to solace ourselves, we cry out of a discontented humour, 'It is better for us to die, than to live.' O! there are many here, to whom it would be death to out-live their idols; their idols and they are pleasant in their lives, and they desire not to be divided in their deaths. 3. Mortification doth not consist in that partial and divided way of mortifying our corruptions; we taking vengeance

upon some of our lusts, but with Saul, sparing it, who is the king; Naaman the Syrian must have an indulgence of his bowing his knee in the house of Rimmon; Lot must plead for the sparing of Zoar, that small thing; and so, when we are intending that work of mortification, we plead for the sparing of these things which we call Zoars, these small, but our master corruptions. Certainly that evangelic mortification which is required of us, doth not consist in this; for we must intend an universal separation betwixt us and all our idols; we must cast away all our 'idols to the moles and to the bats, and we must defile the covering of them, and he alone must be the cover of our eyes.' He never knew what the grace of mortification meant, who never set about the accomplishment of the ruin of that great and master-idol, which domineereth over him. And we conceive, that the best and most solid way of knowing our growth in mortification, is by reflecting upon the decay of these idols, which are our predominants; other sins which assail us may decay, and their strength wax weak, and yet mortification not be on the growing hand; for there are many of our lusts that rather die by concession, than by constraint; there are many of our idols that rather go out of us, than are cast out.

Now the *first* thing that a Christian ought to endeavour to mortify is, his love to the world, which was the practice of this holy man: in the words, he pointeth out unto us that way wherein he did attain to this complete and spiritual mortification to the world, holden forth to us in these words, *By whom:* which doth relate unto Jesus Christ, who is made mention of in the words going before: or, as the words may be rendered, 'By which I am crucified to the world:' and so they relate unto the cross of Jesus Christ. Now, under this notion of 'being crucified,' he doth certainly hold forth unto us, the great difficulty that is in accomplishing the work of mortification: and under this name of 'being crucified,' he holdeth forth unto us, the longsomeness of the time we must spend, before we can attain complete mortification; crucifying being on the most painful and slow of all violent deaths: mortification is not a work of one day, it will cost us many days and years before we shall crush the head of him, who hath so oft-times crushed our heel, before that blessed promise shall be fulfilled, that 'all things shall be put in subjection unto us.' Sin doth most easily invade us, and take possession of us, but it is not so easily dispossessed; for except we had the infinite strength of him who is Jehovah, we might sit down and close our hands, and never mint to oppose these idols, under whose subjection we are. This word of 'being crucified,' doth likewise hold forth the painfulness and uneasiness of this

work of mortification; crucifying being a death, amongst all violent deaths, one of the most bitter; we must certainly be mortified to our ease, before we can be mortified to our lusts; we must travel in birth, before the grace of mortification can be formed in us. It is a woful evil in these days, that the most part of people walk under this apprehension, that there is not much difficulty to mortify their corruptions: but it is a token that they never knew what it was to mortify them, who never knew the difficulty of mortification.

The *third* thing that is holden forth under this name of *being crucified* is, that woful reluctancy, and indisposition of spirit, which we have to this blessed exercise of mortifying our corruptions; we have as great unwillingness unto it, as though we were to subject ourselves to some violent death. O! how is vanity and corruption joined to the spirits of the sons of men? How loath are we to have that woful and accursed union betwixt us and our lusts dissolved! O how many orators and pocurators within ourselves, have we to plead for this, 'the sparing of our lusts?' We may be persuaded of this, that if we be not the ruin of our iniquity, iniquity will certainly be our ruin. O! how we may blush and be confounded seven days, that we should be so loath to have a separation betwixt us and these things, by which our distance with God, and estrangement from him, is so much increased? This vanity is unspeakable, that we should be so averse from that wherein our eternal blessedness doth lie, in having that woful band, which we have wreathed about our own necks, taken off by that blessed and everlasting hand of him, who hath died, and risen again, to accomplish this blessed design.

Lastly, Under this word *of being crucified*, is held forth unto us, that complete and spiritual mortification to the world that this holy man attained to; he was as one dead to these things; he was not much exercised in joy, in having the world: neither was he exercised in grief, by wanting the things of the world: he was a man dead, which could not be moved by any of those things: we do not say so, that Paul was altogether a Stoick, without all passions of grief and sorrow or of joy; but we only say this, that he did not grieve for the want of the world, as those who have no hope; neither did he so joy in having the world, as those who have not a more divine and high spring of consolation; he was clothed with a holy indifferency, and a blessed neutrality, in having or wanting these things: it was none of Paul's desire to have the world; he had learned that divine and excellent art of being content with every state of life, he knew not what it was to murmur. And it were certainly much

our advantage, to be provoked to jealousy, when we reflect upon the practice of this holy man. I conceive, that if all that are here would examine themselves, by how many degrees their mortification to the world doth come short of this, they might sit down and conclude with themselves, that they are yet to begin to mortify; yea, there are many here, to whom we may say; that they are so far from being clothed with a holy indifferency, in having the things of the world, that they are clothed with that woful and indispensible necessity in pursuing after these things. This is the language of the most part, 'Give, give;' men hurrying themselves in multitudes of hopes, and of fears, and of expectations, and likewise an infinite number of desires; and what is the end and result of all these things, but 'vanity and vexation of spirit.'

Now that you may be helped to attain this concerning-duty to be mortified to the world, we shall propose these things unto you; the *first* is this, be much taken up in a holy contemplation and spiritual beholding of these unsearchable excellencies that are in God. If once the soul of the creature were elevated to behold him, there should not be much difficulty to be mortified to the world: were we once admitted to draw by a lap of the vail, and behold that uncreated glory, and inexpressible Majesty that is treasured up in him, mortification should be no great difficulty unto us: this is clearly held forth here, for Paul doth tell by whom he had this grace of mortification, it was by beholding 'that pleasant plant of renown, Jesus Christ;' this is clear likewise, 1 John v. 5. 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?' Did we once believe that fundamental article of faith, that he, who was crucified upon the tree, was the real Son of God, we should most easily win to this concerning duty of mortification. We may reduce all the causes of our little growth in this blessed work to that woful ignorance of God, wherewith the most part of us are clothed; were there a door opened to us in heaven, and were we in the Spirit to behold him who sits upon the throne; whose countenance is like a Sardine stone, and about whose throne there is that rain-bow, could we penetrate through these vails, wherewith both he and they are covered? We being clothed with the vail of our ignorance, and likewise with the vail of our impurity; and he being clothed with these two most glorious vails, the vail of his unsearchableness, and the vail of that wonderful and inexpressible Majesty that is in him, the one confounding the judgment, and the other confounding the affections, so that affection and judgment, in a manner, are put to a non-exercise, and both these do sweetly

resolve in that blessed one act of admiration. We need not speak much to the commendation of those unto you, who were never acquainted with him, that so ye might be persuaded to forsake your old lovers; we shall only say this, silence and admiration they speak least, and yet speak most; there is more divine oratory in holy silence, and more excellent expressions in blessed admiration, than all our invention could reach; what can man speak of him, who is that unsearchable and incomprehensible Majesty? This may appear a paradox to you, that silence should speak, and admiration commend: but it is no paradox, when the object of our commendation, is by infinite degrees exalted above our blessings, and our praise. O! men of the world, will you once be persuaded to make that blessed divorce betwixt you and your idols, that there may be an everlasting conjunction betwixt God and you. O! if ye had so much divine understanding, as to judge of things according to their real worth, 'He alone shall be exalted in that day.' Come and see, and behold what infinite sweetness is treasured up in him, those springs wherewith ye delight yourselves, shall ere long be dried up; but he is that high and infinite spring which always floweth out, and yet is not impaired.

The *second* thing whereby we may attain unto this blessed duty of mortification to the world, is this, by reflecting how passing and transient those things are wherewith the sons of men use to solace themselves. Paul doth press mortification to the world from this consideration, 1 Cor. viii. 31. 'The fashion of this world passeth away:' the word is most emphatic, this Schema and representation of the world, or this stage-play of the world, it passeth away; therefore, 'let those that rejoice, be as though they rejoiced not, and be careful for nothing;' this is clear, 1 John ii. 17. and 1 Pet. iv. 7. Did we solidly believe how changeable those enjoyments of the world are, would we hurry ourselves so much in our pursuits after them? Those who are lifted up in their enjoyments this day, may be thrust down low the next day. Job, who was a man enriched in many things, yet a few days, yea, we may say, a few hours, made a sad and strange exchange. We may affirm that, with great assurance of truth, 'Surely man at his best estate is altogether vanity;' that word that is there, *at his best estate*, may be rendered thus, *Although he stand*, *Etiamsi constitutus*, is our most fixed and settled condition in the world; this is the emblem and motto of your state *vanity*, most subject to change; and why should you weary yourselves in the fire for that which is very vanity?

The *third* thing by which ye may attain to this duty of mortification is, to be much taken up in the consideration of the

brevity of your life. I suppose, that if we were walking more in the house of mourning, and were believing that truth, 'That it is appointed for men once to die,' and that shortly we must be brought home unto that unchangeable estate of life, O! how would this allay us in our pursuits? I think this were a little water, which we might mix with our wine, when there is greatest confidence of creature contentments; lest the foam of this wine should distemper our head, we may mix it with this water, 'the brevity of our life.' It is a sweet subject for meditation when we are most high, to be much in the consideration of this, that within a few days we shall be most low. 'What is your life but a vapour, which doth quickly evanish, and doth but appear for a little?' Suppose the whole creation would stay with you during all your time, yet how short would your enjoyments be? What is man's life, but a hand-breadth, these four finger-breadths, which is one of the least of all geometrical measures, there is morning, forenoon, afternoon, and night, all which do amount to a day? There is infancy, youth, man-hood, and old age, and these do quickly evanish and pass away. How many are hurried into eternity in the first step of their days, in their infancy? And again, how many in their youth? And we have frequent experience, that many in their man-hood, and in the flower of their age, that sentence cometh forth, 'Return, ye children of men:' and there is not one amongst an hundred that do attain to that utmost period that nature doth allow, and what though ye did live fourscore of years, which is the utmost period that nature hath allowed, yet doth your time quickly evanish and flee away? Why should you solace yourselves with those things that cannot eternally remain with you? When ye go down to the grave, ye can take nothing of those things with you, for in all points as you come, so you shall go, and what profit is there that ye have laboured for the wind?

The *fourth* thing whereby we may be helped to attain this, is this, be much in the mortifying of those corruptions which cannot be entertained, but by entertaining also this woful corruption of covetousness: there are some corruptions, which have so near affinity to, as likewise dependence upon, this sin, that if these be not crushed, we cannot attain to this duty of mortification; there is prodigality and pride, these two grand enemies to the accomplishment of this blessed design: and we would begin to crush these, before we can begin to accomplish this.

There is another way, which is this, be much taken up in reflecting upon that blessed hope, and that grace which shall be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Peter presseth sobriety to all things here below, by this argument, 1 Pet.

i. 13. 'Be sober,' and he giveth this reason of it; 'for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' O! were we much taken up in beholding that blessed estate of life, which the souls of just men made perfect shall have with God, where we shall enjoy and yet not loath; there shall be an everlasting conjunction betwixt desire and enjoyment of him, who is the person beloved, so that it thinks never to receive satisfaction; all it doth receive, is more to provoke its appetite than to satisfy its desire.

There is this *last*, which is this, be much in the consideration of that day, when all the families of the earth shall appear before him in the valley of decision. This indeed would help us to much mortification to these things of the world; as is clear from Eccles. xi. 9. Had we the faith of that day engraven upon our spirits, that we must render an account of our ways, O! how wary should we be in engaging with vanity? I think the great cause why sin hath so universal dominion over the sons of men is, because we do not solidly believe that there is such a day approaching, when we shall appear before the judgment-seat of him, who shall judge, not after the seeing of the eye, nor shall reprove after the hearing of the ear, but shall judge righteous judgment. The terror of the Lord would certainly persuade us, if we did believe this. O! what a holy unwillingness should we have in walking after the paths of our idols.

Now we shall shut up our discourse with this, be persuaded once to begin that work of mortification, and especially in mortifying your love to the world; he that returneth victor after that war with his idols, we may call him Joseph, for he shall be as a 'fruitful bough, whose branches run over the walls.' If once you spoil that grand arch rebel, who doth so much oppose you in a manner, you shall stand alone, and sing a triumph, they should flee when none pursueth; 'and we ought to be strong as a lion, and who should rouse us up?'

TWO SERMONS

CONCERNING

SPIRITUAL CONTENTMENT.

SERMON I.

PHILIP. iv. 11. *I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

IT was Adam's ignorance of this divine mystery of Christianity, 'to be content with every estate wherein he was placed,

that did bring him down from that high pinnacle of his excellency, and did degrade him from that primitive glory where with he was clothed; for he not being content with that precious and excellent lot wherein God had placed him, but coveting after a more noble and excellent being, he came exceedingly short of his design; and such is the Athenian and woful frame of spirit wherewith men are possessed, that they can fancy no blessedness in what they are, but imagine a great blessedness to be in what they are not: hence it is, that men do covet the lot of others, and are dissatisfied with their own estate and condition. And certainly the affections of men, while they are living under these spheres which are in perpetual motion, can never be satisfied, nor be at rest; which was the observation of that master of experience, Prov. xxvii. 20. 'Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied:' and as he saith, Eccles. i. 8. 'that the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing:' and we may likewise add, 'that the heart is not satisfied with enjoying:' and it is certainly through the deceitfulness of the spirit of man, and that invisible root of pride, that every lot and condition of life is subject to satiety and loathing: private men do envy the greatness of princes, and princes do envy the quiet repose of private men, though they will not descend nor reduce themselves unto that estate, but do always fear that, which sometimes they are constrained to desire. And believe me, a Christian's sitting down seriously, to contemplate and view what an infinite multitude of hopes, fears and desires, the spirit of man is possessed with; as likewise to behold, how that 'vanity and vexation of spirit' is engraven upon the choicest lot that a Christian can meet with here, he may be provoked to look out at the windows of his prison-house, and long for that precious day, when 'Christ shall be as a roe, or as a young hind, upon the mountains of Beher,' waiting to be exalted to that precious and excellent estate of life, where there shall be neither loathing nor longing. Abel, who hath been the first possessor of heaven, of all the house and family of Adam, and hath dwelt in it near six thousand years, yet there is not in him the least inclination or motion to change or alter his estate: there is nothing loathing in heaven, nor desire to flit there. And believe me, this divine mystery of contentment with every lot and condition, in which a Christian is placed, is not easily attained. O! what repinings hath the unmortified spirit of man to the dispensations of God, in regulating his lot and estate, which doth alone speak forth the atheism of our hearts? For it is, as it were, man proposing a model, and form unto God, how he should rule and govern the world. I think Christians are as much sub-

ject to the fashion of his contempt and pride as any. It was a noble saying of one, in the commendation of victory over a man's self, *Tunc omnia regna tenebis, cum poteris rexisse tui*, Ye shall then be made a possessor of all kingdoms, when ye shall be made a ruler and king of yourself. And, no doubt, one that is once mortified to this passion of discontent, he may dwell upon the mountains of Ararat, in the midst of all the revolutions and changes that are here below; such a Christian may sweetly contemplate the overturning of estates and common-wealths, and may patiently endure every lot that doth befal him, and possess his soul in patience. And certainly, if men knew but this one thing, that the whole circumference of the earth is but one point of the universe, and that all time that hath been, is, or shall be, is but one instant, in comparison of eternity: and what is man, but a part of that point? And what is his life, but a small part of that instant? And why then should man anxiously complain, to spend a part of a moment in enduring the most anxious and sad things that can befal him? And, (as Christ doth most divinely speak) 'Can a man, by taking thought, add one cubit to his stature?' What poor advantage hath a man by his discontentment and sorrow, if it be not to render himself more miserable? We may say of heavenly-mindedness and of contentment, they are like Hypocrates' twins, that live and die together, they are two sweet companions, that always go together, and cannot be divided.

But to descend a little more to the words, you have Paul in them, obviating any misconstruction, that the Philippians might have of his joy, which he expresseth in the former verse, as if he had been one who was coveting great things for himself, or desiring to be great in the world, no, saith he, 'I speak not these things because of want,' which formerly I had, and is now made up; for, saith he, 'I have learned in every state that I am, therewith to be content.' There is no lot, saith Paul, but I can patiently endure it, and can with a divine complacency carry myself under it: and this he proveth in the 12 verse, 'I know, saith he, how to be abased,' I am instructed in this divine art, how to walk soberly under debasement; and 'I know, saith he, how to abound.' I am not one that is puffed up with a prosperous lot in the world: and lest this assertion of Paul's should seem to be a boasting beyond his line, and of being exalted above measure, he doth sweetly subjoin that humble assertion, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me:' as if he had said, do not mistake me, or conceive me under a more divine and high notion than ye ought; for I am but a poor and sinful man, who can do nothing of myself, but as I am over-acted by a divine and

supreme hand. I am enabled to triumph over the most adverse and sinistrous lot that can befal me.

The words which we have read, in the original they are most significant and emphatic; that word which is here rendered *content*, is *all-sufficient;* and so the words they sweetly run thus, 'I have learned in every state wherein I am, to be all-sufficient;' of which that word, Prov. xiv. 14. is a sweet commentary, 'The backslider in heart shall be filled with the fruit of his own way;' but a godly man shall be satisfied from himself. In a manner, there is a well-spring of everlasting consolation within the Christian, which maketh him endure every anxious lot. And no doubt that word, 'I have learned,' both speaketh the difficulty of attaining this mystery of divine contentment; as likewise, it speaketh out that ignorance of this divine and noble end, wherewith Paul was once possessed: I was once, saith he, as rude as any in the knowledge of this thing, but now through the understanding and wisdom of God, I am made perfect in the knowledge of these things. And that word, 'in every state,' doth exceedingly commend that great pitch of Christianity unto which Paul had attained, there was no lot that could befal him wrong. And we shall only say this by the way, continuance of affliction is one of the greatest occasions of impatience that is imaginable. A Christian, when first he meets with a cross, may be provoked to salute it, and embrace it; but if it be lengthened out upon him, then he crieth out, 'Hast thou found me, O thou mine enemy?' And then beginneth to call in question the loving-kindness of the Lord, and to complain, that he hath shut up his mercies in everlasting forgetfulness. Though we may say, in the day that a Christian shall be passing through the valley of the shadow of death, he shall be sweetly convinced of his impatience: when a Christian shall be constrained to engrave that motto upon the door of his everlasting rest, 'He hath done all things well.' What thoughts will ye have of these risings and debatings of spirit wherewith ye have been possessed? We may imagine, and not without some ground, that a great part of eternity shall be spent in interrogations: Christ shall interrogate us, if we lacked any thing while we were here below, and we shall be constrained to answer, nothing; even in that day when he sent us without scrip, or money, or without sandals, or any thing; and those that did belong to us, we shall be constrained to subscribe to the infinite wisdom of God in regulating of our lot.

Now, in speaking upon this divine quality and duty of divine contentment, (which we conceive is a duty most requisite in these days) we shall not insist long in pointing out what this divine grace of contentment is; but we conceive, it includeth not

only this, a sweet and composed frame of spirit, under every anxious lot and dispensation with which we meet, of which that word is a commentary, Lev. x. 3. where it is said of Aaron, when his sons were cut off, 'He held his peace.' And that word, Psalm lxii. 1. 'Truly my soul waiteth upon the Lord;' but the words in the original are thus, 'Truly my soul be thou silent unto God,' as they are rendered in the margin of the book; as if he would have said, 'Do not fret nor be disquieted because of any thing that he carveth out unto thee.'

But likewise this grace and duty of contentment, includeth a holy complacency, and sweet serenity and calmness of spirit under every lot; of which that word is a commentary, James i. 2. 'Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;' and that word, Rom. v. 3. 'We glory in tribulation.' Neither shall we dwell long upon this, to prove that it is the duty of a Christian to be content with every estate wherein God shall put him; this is clear, 1 Tim. vi. 8. 'Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content; and Heb. xiii. 5. 'Be content with such things as ye have:' and James iv. 7. and Luke iii. 14. And we may say, if a Christian made the world but his servant, a little would content him; but if once he make the world his master, and lord of his affections, then his desires will be infinite, and cannot at all be satisfied. We shall not stand long to inveigh against that too much addictedness of man to those passing and transient vanities of the world. We conceive there are these three things, which men do most earnestly covet, there is pleasure, and riches, and honour. And certainly, these are below an immortal spirit, to fix their desires upon them: would ye have Solomon's verdict of riches, O! ye that trust in uncertain riches, ye have it sweetly in Prov. xxiii. 5. 'Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?' In a manner riches they have not a being, for 'they take wings to themselves, and fly away;' as Solomon doth most sweetly speak, Eccles. v. 11. 'If riches increase, what profit, saith he, is there to the owner thereof, save to the beholders of them with their eyes?' All that the owners of the riches hath, is the seeing of them; which a man, who is a passer by, may likewise have, though he be not possessor of them. And hence is that word, Luke xiv. 18. where the man desiring to be excused for not coming to Christ, saith of himself, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it:' all his enjoyment of it was comprehended in that one poor thing, 'to behold it.' And as for honour and glory, which spirits that are more refined, and are not so much wedded to the things of a world, pursue after, I would only have them knowing that one word, Psalm lxii. 9. 'Men of high degree are a lie, and men of low de-

gree are vanity.' As if he would have said, any pre-eminency that one hath, that hath an excellent lot in the world above a poor one, doth consist in this, the one is a vanity, and the other is a lying vanity, speaking somewhat to be in him which is not really in him: and that word, Acts xxv. 23. where, speaking of Bernice that came in with great pomp and glory into the senate-house, the word that is there rendered 'pomp and glory,' is this, He came in with a great fantasy, *Meta polles phantasian*, with a great shout and image, without any thing in reality. And as for pleasures of the world, which these Epicurean spirits of the world are so much besotted, know that verdict of Solomon which he hath of these things, 'Vanity of vanities, and all things are vanity and vexation of spirit.' And what can the man do that cometh after the king? If Solomon found no more, no doubt none that cometh after him can find any more.

But that which we shall speak to the first upon this, shall be what are the causes and principles from whence discontentment of one doth flow, under an anxious or sad lot that doth befal him? And we conceive that it either doth proceed from this, a Christian not being much in the exercise of self-examination; as it is clear from that word, Psalm iv. 4. 'Examine yourselves upon your bed, and be still;' speaking so much, that the compendious way unto submission and contentment under any lot, is to be much about self-examination. And certainly self-examination hath much influence upon contentment under every lot, because such a one doth most accurately take up these imperfections and blemishes that are in him; so instead of complaining, he is constrained to cry out, 'Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?' Likewise one that is much in self-examination, is a man that can take up the intendment of the rod; as likewise the advantage of it; and so he is constrained patiently to bear the rod in his youth, and to sit down and adore the unsearchable wisdom of God, in dispensing such things to him. That word, Prov. xix. 3. is oftentimes verified to us, 'The heart of man perverteth his way,' and then he 'fretteth against the Lord,' when he is chastened for it. O! but if a Christian were dwelling much at home, he might wonder that yet he had a being in the world, and is not cut off from the right hand of the Lord. O! bless him eternally, that ye are not sent away to be reserved in everlasting chains.

There is this likewise that doth occasion discontentment under our lot, and it is, want of that divine preparation to meet with every lot that can befal us before it come. We think a Christian ought to be general in his resolution, to bear every cross that Christ will carve out. And certainly, there are

these two advantages that a Christian hath of general and universal resolutions: *first*, He hath this advantage, that when he is chastened, as it were, in his goods, or any other thing that belongeth to him, he beginneth to sing a song of praise, because it is not worse with him; there can no lot befal a man who is universal in his resolutions, but he will sing a song of praise unto God because of it. *Secondly*, He hath this advantage, that foresight and resolution to meet with any cross, doth exceedingly dispose the Christian for meeting with it. We conceive that word, which is, Job iii. 25. on Job's patience, 'For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me.' Afflictions do oftimes surprise us, and so we faint in the day of adversity, and so prove our strength to be but small.

There is this likewise, which occasioneth our discontentment, and it is this, that little heavenly-mindedness that is in a Christian when he meeteth with his rod. O! but a Christian, when he sitteth down upon mount Pisgah, to behold that promised land, might with patience bear his rod. This is clear, 2 Cor. iv. 16. compared with verse 17. where Paul giveth this reason of his courage and constancy under his rod, that he had an eye unto those things that are eternal; did ye never know what such things meant, as to drown the thoughts of your present misery in these precious depths of eternity; to be beholding so much in heaven; as might infinitely solace, yea, and make up all your losses here? I confess, that opinion of the Stoicks, that did commend indolency and want of passions unto men, that they should not be moved with grief for the want of any thing, nor be moved with joy for the having or possessing of any thing, is in some sense good: hence was it, that in some sense they spoke divinely, *Nihil boni vel mali accidit homini, nisi bonus vel malus animus;* that there was no evil nor good that did befal man, but only a good and evil mind; if the heart was in a divine and spiritual frame, they know not what any other sad or anxious lot could do to them.

There is this likewise which occasioneth discontentment, and it is this, the want of the taking up God, as the cause and author of those sad evils which befal us; which, if it were once believed, we should be ashamed to dispute and murmur so much as we do; this is clear, 1 Sam. iii. near the close, that word of Eli, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good;' and that word, Psalm xxxix. 9. 'I was dumb and opened not my mouth;' and the reason is given of it, 'because thou didst it;' and that word, Isa. xxxix. 8. 'Good is the word of the Lord.' And certainly the murmurings and repinings of our hearts do speak that gross atheism that dwelleth with us. O! durst we debate with him who is Almighty, or put him to make an account of

his ways, who is that *supreme and absolute One;* is it fit to be said to such a prince as he is, thou art ungodly, and to condemn him who is most just! O! be much in the study of the sovereignty of God, when he, as it were, doth call, as in a solemn assembly, all your terrors round about.

There is this likewise which doth occasion it, which is, our little being in the meditation and serious thoughts of the brevity of our life and of time: if a man knew that it were but for an hour, or for ten days that he were to endure tribulation, he might patiently submit and bear with his rod; this is clear, 1 Cor. vii. 29. compared with the following verses, where, from that doctrine, that time was short, he doth infer this exhortation, 'Let those that weep, be as tho' they weeped not;' as if he would have said, 'Let them not be much moved with those things, time will have a close.' Believe me, it is not long before the small period of time that hath intervened betwixt eternity before, and eternity after shall be sweetly swallowed up, and there shall be nothing but eternity.

And there is this, *lastly*, which doth occasion our great discontentment under our rod, which is, that unmortifiedness and unsubduedness of spirit: pride being the great predominant evil: and if we may allude to that word, 'only by pride cometh contention;' we may certainly say it holdeth well here, that only by pride are these contendings that we have with God, concerning his dispensations towards us. In sum, it is this, it is impossible for a Christian not humble, to be content. Pride is one of the greatest opposites unto divine contentment under any rod that we meet with: O! but if a Christian were humbled, he might sit in the dust, and sweetly adore the infinite love and patience of God.

Now we shall, in the *second* place, propose some considerations that may hinder a Christian, or any other, from being discontent with any lot that doth befal them. And the *first* is this, that there are many sad and woful companions of a Christian's discontentment and repining against any dispensation of God. And we conceive, it is not only this bad companion that a Christian hereby is indisposed and unfitted to go about spiritual duties, especially these two, of prayer and praise. It is impossible for a Christian, that is under the exercise of discontentment, to pray or praise; there is somewhat of this pointed at, 1 Tim. ii. 8. where there is a qualification of a right prayer, that he should be *without wrath*, not having any murmurings or repinings within his heart: as likewise it is clear concerning praise, Psalm lvii. 7. 'My heart is fixed, it is fixed,' which speaketh so much as this, that praise doth require a divine and composed frame of spirit:

and it is most certain, that discontentment doth impede prayer; for there are three sweet ingredients of the exercise of prayer, which discontentment doth exceedingly cut off; there is love, fervency, and faith, which no doubt, discontentment doth abridge; a discontented Christian cannot be a Christian burning with love; jealousy is such a predominant with him, that love cannot be his exercise. And certainly, if prayer do not proceed from the precious principle of love, it wants that one arm which it ought to have. Neither can a Christian exercise faith, because he hath now, as it were, taken up so bad an opinion of God, that he cannot repose his confidence nor hope in him: and as for fervency, they are so much in poring upon their present lot, that they can as it were, be fervent about nothing, but only in the removal of that. It is certain, that let a Christian examine himself, there is nothing that cuts the neck of prayer so much as discontent; in a man, the spirit, as it were, is turned brutish, being uncomposed for any spiritual converse with God.

There is this bad companion likewise which accompanieth discontentment, we are incapacitated and rendered altogether unable to resist temptations while discontentment is in exercise. It is impossible for a Christian to be a mortifier, or resister of lust, when discontentment is once in exercise; and are these two evils, that get most marvellous advantage over those that are under discontentment, and these are the predominant lusts of such a one, be what it will, and pride, these two evils do spring apace. And certainly, all other lusts do get much victory over such a one: a Christian may lose more by one hour's discontentment under a cross, than he can regain in many months, yea, on this side of eternity: and it is no wonder that temptations do prevail upon such a one, he is off his watch: and his strength is gone. In a manner temptations speaketh that, 'Their strength is gone from them, let us go up, and put them to flight.'

There is this bad companion likewise that doth accompany discontentment, want of tenderness of spirit, and the loss of it. It is most certain, that there is nothing that doth cut off tenderness so much as discontentment, for a Christian that is such, is not living under the impression of the fear, or of the love of the Almighty, which are the two great principles of tenderness of spirit. Certainly, let one examine, they will find, that by their anxiety and bitterness of spirit, they have made their hearts to die as a stone within them, and have made their bands strong upon their spirits.

And there is this *last* bad companion of discontentment, a Christian undervaluing all the former mercies which he hath re-

ceived; when once a Christian meeteth with that which contradicteth his humour, and he loseth his esteem of every thing that formerly hath been bestowed upon him. There is something of this pointed at, Gen. xxxvii. ult. in Jacob's impatience in the loss of Joseph, where he doth undervalue all his brethren beside; and it is most clear in that word, Gen. xii. 13. where, though it be spoken of a wicked man, yet by proportion it holdeth of a Christian; because Mordecai did not bow his knee, he cried out concerning all his other mercies, 'They avail me nothing;' he knew not what it was to put a price upon mercies that he had received; but because this, which was the great lust of his heart, was away, he did undervalue the rest: and it is most certain, that there is nothing doth so heighten a Christian's disrespect unto the most precious and excellent things of God, as this of discontent: and this is one subtilty and device of Satan's, that a Christian may, with great ease, and with less conviction do it; they do ordinarily construct their choicest mercies to be delusions, and so, upon that account, begin to undervalue and misprise them.

There is this consideration which may move you to wrestle against discontentment, it is a character and distinguishing mark of a Christian from a reprobate. I would have murmurers seriously to meditate upon that sad word, which is in Jude, 19th verse compared with the 15th verse, where, speaking of Christ's coming to judge and execute vengeance, the first put in the roll are these, 'These are murmurers and complainers;' and that word, 1 Cor. x. 10. 'Be not murmurers, as many of them were, and were destroyed of the destroyer.' And certainly, it is no wonder that murmuring pass under so bad a notion, not only because it is indeed that sin which speaketh out our atheism most, but because it is that sin which doth declare most a Christian, or any others desire to be independent and not in subjection unto God; in a manner, such is the woful ambition of our spirit, that we desire not to depend upon him, but that we should have our own lot in our own hand, to carve out unto ourselves. O! we know not what it is to give Christ any one vote in the dispensations which doth befal us; we would be co-ordinate with God, and not subordinate to him, to put a blank in his hand, desire him to fill it up with what he liketh; Christ doth oft-times put a blank in a Christian's hand; as in that word, 'what will ye that I should do unto you?' There is Christ's blank that he doth give us, and though through our ignorance we cannot fill it up, it is best to give it back to himself, that he may fill it up with what he listeth.

There is this consideration also, that may persuade you to desist from discontentment, it is the sin which doth interrupt the accomplishment of the promises. As likewise, it doth inter-

rupt the exercise of faith upon the promises; this is clear, Numb. xiv. 27. compared with the 8th verse, where that promise that was given to them of entering into the land of Canaan, they were cut short of it because of their murmuring: and it doth interrupt the exercise of faith upon the promises; as is clear, Psalm cvi. 24, compared with verse 25, where it is said, 'They believed not his word:' and the ground of it is given, 'for they were murmurers.' And it is no wonder that murmuring interrupts the exercise of faith upon the promises, for it is impossible for a murmurer either to have the faith of the omnipotency of God, or to have the faith of his goodness or love, which are the two precious pillars of faith upon which it must build itself. O but those that begin once to debate with him, do quickly put faith out of exercise. And I would have you knowing this, that there is a discontentment of judgment, and a discontentment of the will and affections, and oftentimes a Christian will get over the discontentment of judgment and reason, when he cannot mortify the discontentment of his will and affections; for the sovereignty of God, and the sinfulness of our nature, will silence our reason: but no doubt it must be his own immediate hand, that must silence the murmurings of our will; this is clear, Psalm xii. 5. where David is convinced of the unreasonableness of his discontentment, and yet he is forced to debate with his will concerning the quieting of it.

There is this consideration likewise, which may provoke you to desist from discontentment under your lot; it is a most unreasonable evil for a Christian to be discontent: for as Christ speaketh, Matth. vi. 27. 'What profit have you by taking thought? Can you add one cubit to your stature?' It is a poor thing when a man hath lost his goods, to lose his patience also; what a poor revenge is that which a man taketh of himself? And certainly the unreasonableness of impatience under the rod doth not only appear in this, that it hindereth and interrupteth a Christian's seeing of any mercy that is in the rod, it is impossible for a discontented one to take up mercy in the stroke: but also that impatience is the compendious way for the prolonging of your strait, and the involving of you in greater miseries and thraldoms: as likewise impatience doth heighten and increase the cause of your bondage, and multiplieth your iniquities. O but it is a sweet and excellent study for a Christian to endeavour patience under every lot! And, in a manner, when we cannot read love in his hand, nor in his face, because of his frowns and strokes, yet by faith to draw aside the vail, and read love in his heart, and cry out, 'I know the thoughts of his heart, that they are thoughts of peace and not of evil.' Certainly it is through

discontentment that we cry out, 'Though his word be as soft as oil and butter, yet war is in his heart!' we do charge him with contradictions, betwixt his profession and his purposes.

And there is this consideration likewise, which may deter you from discontentment, which is this, it is impossible for a Christian to profit by his rod, while he is discontent; all the time that a Christian is under the fit of impatience, he spendeth so much of his time most prodigally; not employing it, not promoving that which is the great design of the rod, *to take away sin*, but studying to involve himself in a greater captivity and bondage, and to subject himself under the hand of his iniquities. Oh! that ye might be persuaded to exercise more divine contentment under your lot, and that ye may be more exercised in contemplating and beholding those precious and excellent things that are above. That is a most remarkable word which Jacob had to Esau, Gen. xxxiii. 11. 'I have enough:' the word in the original is this, *I have all.* And as critics do observe, that word which Esau had in the 9th verse, *I have enough*, is not that which Jacob hath in the 11th verse, *I have enough;* that though Jacob was a poorer man than Esau, yet *he had all;* such a Christian as hath Christ for his portion, may sweetly sing, 'though I be poor, yet I do possess all things; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things; as sorrowing, and yet always rejoicing; as poor, and yet behold we are rich.' It is not long before that day shall come, 'when Christ shall make up his jewels,' when there shall be a clear and most palpable difference made betwixt the precious and the vile; behold he is upon his way, and therefore do not murmur nor repine. A Christian must not expect two heavens, it is enough if he possess one; we must not travel to heaven through a bed of roses, it is not much though we go to heaven in a fiery chariot, having afflictions and calamities our companions all along the way; when our feet shall be passing through the threshold of the door of our everlasting rest, then our chains shall fall from our hands, and our fetters from our feet, then might we lift up our heads, with joy and rejoicing. O! but when those heavens which you behold shall be rolled up as a scroll, when these two great vails, the visible vail of the heavens, and the invisible vail of iniquity, shall be rent from the top to the bottom, and we shall have most clear and precious discoveries *of that noble plant of renown*, when we shall sit down at the well's head and drink, and forget our misery, and remember our poverty no more; let hope evanish into fruition, and faith into possession, and let time sweetly evanish into eternity.

SERMON II.

PHILIP. iv. 11. *I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

IT is an ordinary and usual error and delusion among Christians, that they place the exercise of religion in those duties that are most sublime and high unto their apprehensions, as faith, hope and prayer, but undervalue the exercise of those lower duties, as contentment, mortification to the world, and charity to the poor, as not being so essentially necessary for the being of a Christian. I am persuaded, that if any of you had been a hearer of the apostle James, when he was discoursing upon that divine subject, wherein pure religion and undefiled did consist, no doubt ye would have imagined, that he would have brought forth some divine and profound thing, in the exercise of which pure religion before *God and the Father* did consist; but believe me, religion doth more consist in practice, than in speculation; and more in obedience, than in refined notions; what conceive ye of such a definition of pure religion and undefiled, as that which is, James i. 27. 'Pure religion and undefiled,' doth consist in mortification to the world, and in charity to the poor, these two low undervalued duties. And this may further ingratiate and commend the exercise of those low and undervalued duties, that in the day when Christ shall appear to judge the quick and the dead, the ground of the approbation of the saints shall be founded upon this low and contemptible duty, 'Charity to the poor;' and shall be that ground which is given of that eternal blessedness, which approbation of Jesus Christ, no doubt, is a confirmation of James' doctrine, and that which shall be the ground of the reprobation of the wicked, shall be the neglect of this low duty, want of 'charity to the poor, and visiting of the fatherless.' And believe me, in the exercise of this divine quality of Christian contentment, not a little of religion doth consist; Paul saith, 'Godliness with contentment is great gain.' It is by faith that a Christian enjoyeth God; it is by love that he enjoyeth his neighbour; and by contentment that he enjoyeth himself. We confess, it is a most mysterious and difficult lesson for a Christian, in each lot he is placed in, to be crying out, 'It is good for me to be here, let me make a tabernacle here.' Ordinarily we have strong desires to have the carving out of our own lot. Solomon maketh mention of three things that are not satisfied, and of four that never say, 'it is enough; the grave, the barren womb, the earth that is not filled with water, and fire.' And we may add unto these four, this one fifth, the most

part of men who are unsatisfied in their lot: it is no wonder that men, unlimited in their desires, meet with great disappointments; for those that have exorbitant and excentric desires, must have great hopes, as likewise great disappointments: therefore it were certainly your advantage to be studying to compendize and abridge your desires after these things that are here below: for as one spoke well, "He conceived that the greatest "riches of a man did consist in poverty of desires, and in being "content with that lot wherein God had placed him." There are only these three things that befal a Christian, under which it is great difficulty for him to attain to contentment; there is the loss of his predominant lust and idol, especially if it be any whit refined, and vailed under the vail and vizard of any virtue; as if one be given unto the seeking of the applause of the world, there is nothing under which there is so great a difficulty to exercise contentment, as in the losing of that applause, our hearts oft-times crying out, 'They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?' And certainly oft-times our lusts die unto us, before we die unto them; which is the occasion that our living lusts do sit down and lament over the graves of our buried idols, and wish that they may awake and stand up from the dead. And we shall only say to such, 'Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you,' which may hinder people from pursuing after that idol; but much more especially that word, John v. 44. 'How can ye believe, that seek glory one of another?' Which words seem to import an inconsistency betwixt the exercise of faith, and betwixt the exercise of pursuit after idols.

There is this likewise that befalleth a Christian, under which it is a great difficulty for him to attain to contentment; and that is, the continuance and lengthening forth of any affliction that doth befal him: oft-times a Christian, when first he meeteth with his cross, will salute and embrace it, and will cry out, 'This is a grief, and I must bear it:' but when the thread of our affliction is spun out unto any length, then we begin to be discontent, and cry out, 'Hast thou found me, O thou mine enemy?' This was clear in the exercise of Job, who, when first he met with his cross, did express divine contentment under a most eminent way, crying out, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord;' when he was made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights were appointed for him, then he crieth out, 'I choose strangling and death, rather than life.' And we shall only say to such, be much in the meditation of that precious and immense hope, and go up to the top of mount Pisgah, and there be with Moses in the viewing of that land which is afar off. As likewise, study to seal that divine conclusion, 'That he doth all things well.'

There is this, *thirdly*, which befalleth a Christian, under which he hath a great difficulty to exercise contentment, which is, poverty and want in the world. Agur, who was well acquainted with his own heart, and knew well his unsuitableness to bear such a cross, crieth out, Prov. xxx. 8, 9. 'Give me not poverty, lest I steal, and take the name of my God in vain.' It is certain, that to exercise faith upon God for the receipt of common mercies, is more difficult than to exercise faith on God for our eternal salvation, and for our interest in Jesus Christ. And we conceive, that the reason why a Christian findeth greater difficulty to exercise faith upon God for the receipt of these common mercies, than for the receiving of that cardinal and unspeakable mercy, salvation through Jesus Christ, to be either this, that faith, when it is exercised upon the one, must simply and immediately rely upon the omnipotency and faithfulness of God, abstracted from all other props and considerations; for their sense and reason doth contradict the exercise of faith; but when Christians do exercise faith upon God, for righteousness and salvation, they ordinarily have either somewhat of sense, or somewhat of holy reason, that doth underprop and help their faith; and this likewise is the occasion of it, that not so ordinarily a Christian is put to the exercise of the one, as unto the exercise of the other; but, believe me, it is no small difficulty for a Christian to act in confidence upon God, when he is reduced unto a low and pinching estate in the world. And we shall only say to such, who murmur and repine under such an estate, cast your eyes upon him who was the heir of all things, of whom it is recorded, 'That he had not so much as where to lay his head.' As likewise, cast your eyes upon a number of that precious cloud of witnesses, who are now entered into the everlasting possession of that precious and excellent lot, who are constrained to wander in dens and caves of the earth, having sheep and goats skins for their clothing. Ye are now in the state of your minority, and therefore ye are rich but in hope and expectation, and so ye may dispense, though ye be not rich in possession: though we may say, a Christian that hath 'him, who is all in all, must of necessity enjoy all in all.

Now that which we shall further speak upon this divine quality of contentment, besides those things which we spoke of at the last occasion; we shall point out a little the difficulty of attaining unto contentment under every lot and estate that a Christian falleth in: the difficulty of it is fully shown in that word, 'I have learned,' as it were, in speaking so much as this. Once Paul was as ignorant of this mysterious lesson of divine contentment, but he was instructed by him, who is the Prince of pas-

tors, by whom he did attain to the knowledge of this: and this speaketh forth the difficulty of it, that a Christian must be much in self-examination, and self-searching, before he can attain unto contentment: there is somewhat of this pointed at, Psalm iv. 4. 'Examine yourselves upon your beds;' and there is a promise annexed to this, 'and ye shall be still, or be still.' And the influence that self-examination hath upon this divine quality of contentment, may not only appear in this, that a Christian, who is much in reflecting upon himself, taketh up ordinarily a suitableness betwixt the cross and his humour; as it were, he seeth infinite wisdom shining, in carving out such a lot and dispensation unto him, and so is constrained to adore the unsearchable riches of the wisdom of God: as likewise, its influence may be shown in this, that a Christian, who is much in self-examination, doth behold such spots and blemishes in himself, that he is forced to wonder that it is no worse with him, and so is constrained to 'glorify God in the fire.' I confess it may be a wonder, that this is not a wonder unto a Christian every day, that he is not consumed, and cut off from his right hand. O that ye would once be much in the study of yourself! That ancient advice of a heathen, *Gnathi seauton, know yourself*, were worthy to be practised by all Christians; we are too much roving abroad, and too little at home. It is reported of some beasts, that they have eyes to see abroad, but have no eyes to see at home; which, no doubt, is the case and exercise of the most part who have lived in these days.

This likewise pointeth forth the difficulty of attaining to this duty of contentment, that a Christian, before he can attain it, must be much in the exercise of these two cardinal graces, 'faith and love:' certainly, till once we be studying the exercise of them, contentment will be at a low and weak standing with us. And, no doubt, the exercise of faith, not only concluding our interest in Jesus Christ, and in sealing that conclusion, that 'he is ours,' is most necessary for attaining of contentment, but likewise the exercise of faith for attaining of contentment, may be shown in this, that faith is that grace, which is the best interpreter of the dispensations of God: this may be recorded to the commendation of that grace of faith, that it knoweth not what it is to bring up a bad report unto God. And certainly, as long as we consult with these three bad counsellors, sense, reason, and misbelief about the dispensations of God, this will be the result of that counsel, to have sorrow in your heart daily; but study to employ that wise counsel for faith, for which sometimes, because it is so intelligent a grace, is called *understanding*; as is clear from Col. ii. 2. Now this is clear, that faith hath

influence upon contentment, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. where David from this, that God had made with him an everlasting covenant, he crieth out, 'I am not much anxious, though other things should fail, and though my house should not be so with God.' As likewise it is clear, Psalm cxlii. 4, 5. where the exercise of faith upon this, that God was his portion, made him with patience to submit, 'Though all refuge should fail him, and none should care for his soul.' As likewise, Psalm xxxvii. 1. compared with verse 3. where he presseth that duty of trusting in God, by which they may obviate the exercise of discontent and fretting. Love likewise, no doubt, must be exercised before a Christian do attain unto this divine quality of contentment. There are these two precious properties of love which are given, 1 Cor. xiii. 4. 5. "Love endureth long, and love thinketh no evil:" which, no doubt, have great influence upon contentment. We confess, love sometimes is the most impatient grace of a Christian, and sometimes the most patient grace of a Christian; in a manner, love, when it is in its most vigorous exercise, will endure more sad afflictions than faith: faith sometimes will be languishing, and giving over, when love will support and strengthen it; it being afraid to conceal that woful conclusion, 'That he is not ours; love knoweth not what it is to entertain jealous thoughts of him, who is the lover, 'it thinketh no evil;' and certainly, when the grace of love is in its vigorous exercise, it is most tender to act any thing by which the person that is loved may be wronged, or a bed report may be brought up upon him. A Christian may be united unto precious Christ, by that golden and invisible chain of his beauty, and transcendent excellency, can with patience endure the loss of all things beside Christ. Love is peremptory in nothing but this, the enjoyment of the loved; and love is sorrowful for nothing, but the loss of him who is loved; he moveth in so high a sphere, and is so far elevated above all things that are here below, that, in a manner, he possesseth his soul in patience in the midst of all the revolutions and changes that are here below; in a manner, the grace of love doth incorporate a Christian in Jesus Christ, and doth make him to dwell in Christ as his mansion-house, and so he is not much taken up with those things that are abroad.

There is this likewise, which speaketh forth the difficulty of attaining unto divine contentment, and it is this, a Christian must be in the exercise of the grace of mortification to all the passing and transient vanities of the world. Do not these risings and murmurings of the Spirit, speak the little exercise of mortification that is amongst us? For if we were once mortified to the world, we should then exercise contentment under every

lot; this is clear from the comparing of these two places, Psalm cxix. 96. where David saith, 'I have seen an end of all perfection;' which speaketh forth that distinct discovery that he had of the vanity of the world; in a manner, he had it brought within his sight, which is one of the most unerring senses; compared with that most remarkable place, which breathes forth much of divine contentment in him, 1 Sam. xv. 25, 26, where he saith, 'But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.' Here, in a manner, is David making a resignation of his crown, and seeing an end of the perfection of that glistering and passing vanity. As likewise, it may be shown from the paralleling of these two places, Gal. iv. 14. where Paul saith of himself, 'I am crucified unto the world, and the world is crucified unto me.' In a manner, Paul and the world made a sorrowless parting, as two dead men parting one from another: and the words that we have read, where he breathed forth this divine quality of contentment. I think certainly, a Christian reflecting upon the changeableness, inconstancy, and vexation of things here below, will not be much moved with the loss of them. It was upon this ground that heathens did attain unto such a length in this divine quality of contentment; for they, beholding that fear and desires were the two inseparable companions of those that had most of these fancied delights of the world; for even those, that have the greatest abundance, are vexed betwixt these two passions, fear and desire; fear to lose what they have attained, and desire to attain more. We conceive, that it is a remarkable thing that is recorded of Sesostris king of Egypt, who was so ambitious, that he would needs have his chariot drawn with four kings, one of which had his eye continually upon the motion of the wheel of the chariot, which the king observing, did ask him the ground why he did so exercise himself? He did most fitly reply, "It putteth me in mind of the mutability and "changeableness of the things of the world; for, saith he, the "highest part of the wheel is instantly the lowest part, and the "lowest part of the wheel is instantly the highest;" which moved the ambitious prince to desist from so ambitious a practice. And, believe me, if ye would read that inscription upon the forehead of all things, 'Vanity and vexation of spirit,' ye might easily attain unto contentment.

There is this, *fourthly*, which speaketh forth the difficulty of attaining unto contentment, that a Christian, before he win to it, must necessarily be mortified unto the innate and co-natural idol, pride. Pride must be once brought low, before contentment can be attained. We conceive, discontent and pride have

sworn a covenant of agreement, that they shall be undivided in their life, and undivided in death. they are chained together by an unchangeable chain of amity: and, believe me, it is impossible for a Christian to be discontent, but he must of necessity be proud. And, upon the contrary, a Christian that is proud, he must of necesssity be a discontented one; for there is nothing that is the mother of contentment so much as humility, which moveth a Christian silently to bear his yoke, and to sit down, and put his mouth in the dust, because he hath done it. In a manner, a humble one, and one that hath distinct knowledge of his own baseness, knoweth not what it is to cry out, 'Why am I thus?' Such a one is much in admiration, and little under murmuring; much in praise, and little in complaint.

There is this, *lastly*, which pointeth forth the difficulty of it, a Christian cannot win to contentment, without he be much in heavenly-mindedness, and have his spirit in a spiritual and heavenly frame. There is somewhat of this pointed at, John xiv. 1. compared with the 2d verse, where Christ, proposing a remedy unto the discontentment of the disciples, 'that their hearts should not be troubled,' he doth begin a discourse of heaven, 'that in his Father's house were many mansions,' and that they had an interest into it. As likewise, there is somewhat of this pointed at, Matth. vi. 25, 26, where, to obviate their taking thought what they should eat, or what they should drink, or wherewith they should be clothed, he desireth them 'to seek first the kingdom of God.' And certainly one that is much taken up in the contemplation of eternal life, and who is viewing these precious and endless delights that are at his right hand, moveth in a most composed and divine frame; in a manner, he drowneth the thoughts of his present miseries in those precious depths of eternity: he knoweth that one moment of the enjoyment of precious Christ shall fully recompense and make up all those sorrows that he hath met with. I know not what shall be the thoughts of Christians, when that volume of the mercies of the Lord shall be presented unto them, which they have met with here below: how may they be filled with admiration, to see that book written within and without, of the receipts of most singular demonstrations of his love!

We shall, *secondly*, speak a little to provoke you to the pursuit of this divine quality, and so to the advantages that a Christian hath by exercising contentment under every lot. We conceive, it is so excellent a grace, this grace of contentment, that it is indeed a compound of these five graces, faith, humility, patience, hope, and mortification; in a manner, contentment is the result of all these graces, exercising themselves in one; and

except those be in a most vigorous exercise, that absolute contentment is not easily to be attained: but, no doubt, it must be an excellent thing, that deriveth its pedigree and descent from so high and excellent things, as those precious graces of the Spirit. But the first advantage that a Christian hath by divine contentment under his saddest lot, is this, it doth advance a Christian unto most nigh fellowship and correspondence with God; as likewise, a contented one receiveth most sweet manifestations of the presence and fellowship of God with him under his cross: it is most certain, that contentment, when it is attained, is ordinarily accompanied with most nearness and correspondence with him; there is somewhat of this pointed at, Heb. xiii. 5. where, pressing this doctrine of contentment, he saith, 'The Lord will not leave you nor forsake you;' which, though we confess it be principally understood of his providence, yet it may include the manifestation of his presence. As likewise that in James iv. 10. 'Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,' which he is pressing from this duty of contentment, 'and he shall lift you up.' And, no doubt, that invitation doth oft-times come to a contented Christian, 'Come unto me from Amana, and from the top of Shenir, and from the mount Lebanon,' Song iv. 8. Christ loveth to dwell with one that walketh with a composed and silent frame of spirit: and the reason why a contented Christian enjoyeth much of God under his cross is, because he is much in prayer. It is impossible for a discontented Christian to pray to any purpose under his cross, for he wanteth that divine qualification that is required in prayer, 'To lifts up his hands without wrath;' the soul is in such a confused and distempered frame, 'It is so troubled, that it cannot speak. This is clear from Psalm lxxvii. 4. where David had this advantage by his discontent, 'I am so troubled, saith he, that I cannot speak.' Though, we conceive, that there is that which is imitable to David in that case, that a Christian, when he cannot speak, he may make this prayer, 'I am so troubled that I cannot speak,' which was David's practice in that Psalm. There is this second advantage that a Christian hath by the exercise of divine contentment, the want of it doth exceedingly obstruct and hinder a Christian's improving of the cross for his advantage: a Christian that is discontent, cannot receive any advantage by his cross. There is somewhat of this pointed at, Heb. xii. 11. where 'the peaceable fruits of righteousness' flow to a Christian that is exercised under his cross; which, no doubt, doth take in the divine quality of contentment. There are these three precious advantages that a Christian may have by his cross, which discontent doth exceedingly obstruct, there is the exercise of humility, and the exercise of prayer, and the exercise of

mortification: one that is discontent doth obstruct that great advantage of the cross, even humility: he is so much in repining against the dispensations of God, that he cannot at all sit down, and fold his feet, and quietly bear his yoke. O! but contentment includeth in its bosom much divine humility: in a manner, a Christian, when he is content, is clothed with it: discontentment is the mother of pride, and doth add fuel unto that fire: discontentment doth likewise obstruct mortification and conformity with God, which is the precious end of the cross. 'He doth chastise us, that we may be partakers of his holiness:' and this is the fruit of all these things, to take away our sins. And certainly, a discontented Christian cannot be a Christian taken up in mortification: yea, it is most certain, that a Christian may lose more by one hour's discontent, than he may gain in many days, yea, on this side of eternity. O to what length may discontent lead one! likewise it doth obstruct the exercise of prayer, which is a precious end of the cross, 'In their affliction, then they will seek me early, and when my chastening hand is upon them, they will then pour forth their prayers into my bosom;' but one that is in a distempered and discontented frame, is incapacitated to go about this duty of prayer; he is so much conversing with his cross, that he cannot be much in conversing with God. And that is certainly one great defect in a Christian, that they are more taken up in studying the disadvantages of the cross, than in studying the advantages of it; the most part of us will be orators like Cicero, in declaiming our calamities, and in setting them forth to the full; as is clear in Job, who proved a most elegant orator in setting forth his calamities, but in the exercise of praise, our tongues cleave to the roof of our mouth, and we are silent unto God. There is this *third* advantage that a Christian hath by the exercise of contentment, it doth obviate and obstruct many temptations that a Christian is liable unto by his discontentment. I know not any sin in scripture that hath produced such bad and woful effects, as the sin of discontentment. What made Ahithophel to seek a cord, and go hang himself, was it not his discontent? Discontent is the mother of most sad and desperate resolutions, for we cannot submit unto our cross, and therefore we study to extricate ourselves out of our cross, by involving and entering ourselves into that endless and unsupportable cross. Therefore we would desire you, under your afflictions, to study contentment. O! what atheistical thoughts will lodge in the bosom of one that is discontent; we may see them clearly in the practice of David, who cried out under his discontentment, 'I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.' Certainly there is nothing that will oc-

casion the want of the faith of the existence of a Deity, and that there is not a God, so much as this of discontentment.

There is this *fourth* advantage that a Christian hath by his contentment, it maketh the cross most easy to a Christian. Would you know what is the greatest ingredient of the heaviness of any cross? It is discontent. It is certain, by it we make our chain more heavy, and more unsupportable upon our necks: while as, if we were studying this divine quality of contentment, it should abate much of the bitterness of the cross. We may say to one that hath attained to contentment, they may cry out, 'The bitterness of death is past,' and may thus triumph over their cross, 'O cross! where is thy sting? and O affliction! where is your victory?' Certainly, discontent is that which maketh us to sit down and cry out, 'My stroke is heavier than my groaning.' Did you never know what it was to bear your affliction with much inward joy and peace of mind, when you had this grace of contentment.

There is this advantage likewise that a Christian hath by exercising contentment under his cross that he meeteth with, it is a compendious way for a Christian to win to an out-gate under his cross. Would you know what is the most compendious way to have the thread of your afflictions spun out unto a long length? Then study discontentment. But would you know what is the most spiritual and compendious way to have the rod taken off, and to have God no more to turn about the face of his throne? Then study contentment. In a manner, the cross hath gotten and obtained that end and errand why it was sent, when you do attain to contentment and humility under it. We may say of the sin of discontent, that it is a most irrational and reasonless sin; for you cannot, by your discontent, extricate yourselves out of your calamities; all the advantages that you have by it, is this, to make your bonds stronger upon your spirit, and to have your fetters and chains lying more heavily upon you.

There is this advantage likewise that a Christian hath by the exercise of contentment under every rod that he meeteth with, it is that divine quality of the soul, by which a Christian doth attain to mortification unto the pleasures and vanities of a world. O! how sweetly will a contented Christian, under the loss of things here below, speak to the dispraise of these fancied images? It is a poor sight, to behold a living substance tied unto shadows, by these two iron chains of love and delight. Ought we not to study so much holy ambition, and spiritual generosity, as to undervalue all things that are below God, as being below? In a manner, as Jonadab spoke to Amon, 2 Sam. xiii.

4, 'Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day?' We may likewise bespeak the heirs of the promise, and those that are begotten by a lively hope, who being the children of him who is the King of kings; do you wax lean for the loss or want of those things that are here below? Have ye not a kingdom? And why then should you repine at the loss of these things, which are but passing and transient vanities? That which is the great idol of the world, silver and gold, what is it, but more refined dust? It is white and yellowed clay; and we conceive, that much of the excellency of it doth consist in the estimation of men, that they have so valued it; but one that hath the assurance of eternal life, and that God is theirs, may walk through the wilderness with joy. We confess, it is an evil amongst the heirs of the promise, that they love to go to heaven through a most easy and pleasant way; they love to walk to that, alas! of everlasting rest, through a valley of roses; but we must not meet with two heavens, it is abundance if we have that one eternal and everlasting heaven. And as for the cause of discontent under our cross, or any calamity that we meet with, we conceive, pride and want of mortification are the two catholic and general grounds of all our discontent and impatience.

We shall shut up our discourse upon this divine quality of contentment, desiring those men, who have abundance of this world, to study contentment; though this may seem a paradox unto many, why those who have enough should yet be desired to pursue after contentment? We conceive, there are none more discontented than those who have the greatest occasion of contentment; their desires are so much wedded unto the things here below, that this voice is never heard among them, 'It is enough,' and 'I am satisfied.' I conceive, that may fully confute that vain opinion which Christians, and others do entertain, that if they had such a competency of the world, they would be discontent no more, but would silently make on their way; and that which is the ground of their discontent is (as they alleged) the want of a competency of subsistence. I shall only say to you, that which is recorded of Alexander, who, after he had purchased the possession of the world, he was so far from attaining to contentment, 'That (as it is recorded of him) 'he sat down and wept, because there was not another world 'to purchase.' And believe me, this is most undeniable, that if you cannot attain unto contentment under your present lot, it is impossible for you to attain to contentment when your lot is better. It is only the delusion of Satan under which the evil of your discontent is vailed. But as for those who have abundance of these worldly goods, we shall press this exhortation

upon them, which is, Prov. xxiii. 4, 'Labour not to be rich;' which is a thing that ye will not easily close with, though certainly, 'Riches (as he there most divinely speaketh) are a thing that is not.' Now this is most clear, that there is a necessity of pressing those, who have abundance of the world, to be content, where Paul doth subjoin in the following word, 'I know, saith he, how to abound.' People might have imagined, that is no great lesson; but, believe me, it is a great, if not greater, than the other, which is that by which we would press contentment to those that are poor in each lot and estate that they fall in here below: know this, the day is coming when ye shall acknowledge infinite Wisdom in guiding you to heaven by that way. O! give Christ a negative vote in the dispensation of your lot, and be content to be regulated by him, 'who is that wonderful Counsellor,' who, though he lead you by a way that you know not, yet take Christ's advice upon implicit faith; for he knoweth not what it is to disappoint any of their expectations. Study contentment, for it is heaven brought down to earth: for what is the happiness and blessedness of those that are above? It is confined in this one word *contentment*. They have now all anxiety, and all loathing, and all desires, save one, taken away from them. O what a life must it be, to drink of the rivers of pleasures! Did you ever know or read of such a river, the waters whereof are pure delight and pleasure? When we shall sit down and be overjoyed with those consolations that flow from his face; when we shall draw forth that endless line and period of eternity, in having joy and delight flowing in, admiration and praise flowing out. Believe me, the gleanings of a Christian are better than the vintage of a reprobate. 'A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked;' for it is a messenger of hope of that enduring substance which Christ shall give. And since it is the exercise of those that are above, let it be the exercise of those that are below, that there may be a sweet conformity and harmony betwixt the practice of that higher house, and the practice of this lower house; that we may have our souls united unto him, 'who is perfumed with all the powders of the merchant, and whose garments do smell of myrrh and aloes.' Believe this, time shortly is to have a period, and eternity is to come. Let a Christian comfort himself in this, eternity is at hand, when they shall hear that voice, and truth sealed by the oath of an angel, 'Time shall be no more.' Let that precious day come, and let all other days pass away.

ELEVEN
COMMUNION SERMONS,

PREACHED AT SEVERAL PLACES.

SERMON I.

PROV. x. 4.—*But the hand of the diligent maketh rich.*

THERE be four beasts which Solomon commends in the thirtieth chap. of the Prov. from the 25th verse to the 29th. And though they be exceeding little, yet they are exceeding wise: each one of which beasts doth teach us a spiritual and heavenly lesson. And the *first* beast that he commends to us, is the ant, and it may teach Christians that excellent lesson of Christian diligence, that though they be little and not strong, 'yet they provide their meat in the summer;' therefore Solomon presseth the sluggard to consider the ant, to provoke him to diligence. And there is that *second* beast he commends, which is the conies; that may teach Christians that excellent exercise of humility and dependence; which though they be not strong, but feeble creatures, 'yet make they their house in the rocks.' And there is that *third* beast, and that is the locust; which may teach Christians that excellent lesson of unity; 'which, though they have no king, yet they go forth by bands.' There is a *fourth* beast that he commends, which is the spider; which may teach Christians that excellent lesson of heavenly-mindedness, though a despicable thing, 'yet taketh hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces.

Now, I think there is nothing so needful to be pressed, as that excellent doctrine of Christian diligence. It was an ancient and excellent observation of that master in experience, in the eighteenth of the Proverbs, 7th verse. 'He also that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster.'

I may give the Christians of this time, that reproof which Pharaoh unjustly gave to the Israelites, 'Nay, but ye are idle, ye are idle, and do nothing.' O expectants of the crown! do you think to win to heaven, doing so little as you do? Do ye think to win the crown sleeping, without wrestling? It is the diligent Christian that gets Benjamin's portion. It is he that is like the merchant's ship, that brings his goods from afar.

Now, to come to the words; we have Solomon in this, pointing out to us as on a board, slothfulness and diligence; the one in its deformity, and the other in its beauty and excellency: that taking a view of both, we may hate the one; and pursue after the other.

Now in speaking to this soul-enriching duty, I shall not stand to shew, that it is the Christian's duty to be exceeding diligent. Is it not commanded, in Eccles. ix. 10. That 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might?' and in Heb. vi. 11, 12. 'And we desire, that every one of you do show the same diligence, that ye be not slothful." And likewise it is pressed many times in order to some particular duties. As also we perceive, not only are there commands, but practices of saints in scripture, that do press this home. Was not Anna a diligent Christian, who continued eighty-four years in the temple, serving God with fasting and prayers, night and day? I doubt much if there be such a women in Edinburgh * as she: yea, I doubt much if it be the practice of any to come up that length. Was not David a diligent Christian, Psalm lv. 17. 'Evening and morning, and at noon, will I call upon God?' Neither shall I stand to point out, what the duty of Christian diligence is. We conceive, in short, that it comprehends these four things in it: *First*, For a Christian to obey all known commands, that there be not a duty he knows, but he should endeavour to give obedience to it. *Secondly*, It comprehends this, that a Christian should lay hold on every opportunity for doing of this duty, that where there is an opportunity presented to pray, it should not be slighted, but embraced, knowing 'that every thing is beautiful in its time.' And know you not, that oftentimes God calls to prayer when our own hearts call us away from it? *Thirdly*, That a Christian should not only embrace opportunities when they are offered, but we should seek after an opportunity, when there is none presented to us: some will not embrace opportunities presented, but if we were diligent, we would pursue them when they are not presented to us. And there is that, *lastly*, comprehended in Christian diligence, for a Christian to over-go all impediments that lie in the way of doing duty. Some of us are glad of a diversion to hinder us from our duties, as of a hire; but the diligent Christian will not easily take an impediment, he will 'leap over a wall, and break through a troop,' to set about that duty God calls for. And in speaking to this duty in the text, I shall lay down these six or seven propositions: *First*, I shall propose some considerations to press home that excellent and soul-enriching duty of Christian diligence; and the first consideration is taken from the text.

Diligence is a duty that makes rich; therefore be much about this duty: take Solomon's verdict of it, in Prov. xiii. 4. 'The soul of the diligent shall be made fat.' Would you know why the Christians of this time are so much put to it, to cry, 'Their

* This Sermon was preached in Edinburgh.

leanness, their leanness?' Would you know why the Christians are so much in sighing and going backward, and counting that their life is spent here in vain, they are not ascending as pillars of smoke? Even this, they are not diligent. O Christians! when was it that you rose up in the silent watches of the night, to pursue after an absent Christ? It is this would make you rich, with the increase of your diligence. Diligence would make a Christian rich in experience; diligence would make a Christian rich in love; diligence would make a Christian rich in humility; yea, it would make him rich in all the spiritual things in heaven. I may compare diligence 'to Joseph, it is fruitful by a well, whose branches hang over the wall.' Nay, if you were diligent, I know not what you might not win to.

The *second* consideration to press you to Christian diligence, is this, O Christians! 'the night is coming, therefore be diligent, wherein none will see to work.' And in pressing this, I shall amplify those considerations, by adding these three. And, *first*, our time to remain in this valley of misery is but short; therefore be diligent. O Christians! what know ye, but this may be the eleventh hour of the day with you, and but one hour to be spent? When saw thou thy hour-glass last? Therefore be diligent. And upon the improvement of this, much time as thou hast, depends thy everlasting estate. *Secondly*, And, moreover, if thou mispend it, it is impossible to recover thy loss again, Eccles. ix. 10. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.' So if once thou pass the line of time, it is impossible to recover thy estate: Therefore while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, but hearken to his voice.' Ay, there are some hearing me, that when they shall be standing on the utmost line betwixt time and eternity, that shall remember that which that man spake, and shall be constrained to cry out, 'O call time again! O call time again!' But it shall be a needless request: therefore be diligent. *Thirdly*, There is this amplification, and it is, that our night is approaching. And believe it, by all appearance this is Scotland's evening; yea, by all appearance and probability, it is Edinburgh's evening; I mean, it is the evening of the gospel, and of the great and excellent offers of grace to us. O! but, I think, there are great and infallible tokens of Christ's departure from us. And I shall give you these eight or nine evidences, that it is likely Scotland's or Edinburgh's evening is at hand. *First*, Are not the shadows waxing long? And do you not know, that when the sun is near setting, the shadows wax long? And is not our religion of this generation, vanished to shows and shadows, we

loving Christ in our tongues, but entertaining idols in our hearts? O! if we were no more in profession than in reality, I doubt much if we should then be known to be Christians. We have Christ's coat among us, and cast lots for it, but we want the excellent graces of the Spirit; now, I pose you on it, are not the shadows waxing long? O! where is all the ancient substance of godliness, that pure religion, and undefiled, that religion of the Christians of old times? I may say this, 'Deep waters pass away without great noise, but shallow brooks make great din:' more noise in the profession of religion, than piety in the practice. Alas! we have confined our religion of this defecting generation into our tongues. A *second* evidence of our evening approaching, is, Is not the heat of our day past? Is not this the cool of Scotland's evening? O! where is that zeal, that love? Where is that tenderness? Where is that moving of bowels in preaching and prayer, that was formerly in Scotland? Is not the heat of our day gone, and we partakers of the evening? O! believe it, much of our ancient zeal, love, tenderness and moving of bowels is gone, and evidences that Christ is going to depart. A *third* evidence, of our evening approaching is, are not persons ceasing from their labours and works? Then the night is coming. Now, I say, are not the Christians of this time idle, and cease much from their work? Which speaks our evening is stretched out upon us. O! where is that ancient diligence, that labour of love, that patience of hope, that sobriety of faith? O! do you think to win to heaven idly? Does not our ceasing from our work and labour, speak that our evening is stretched out upon us? A *fourth* evidence of our evening approaching is, the great inclination to sleep that is among us; do you not know, when folk have a great inclination to sleep, that the night is approaching? O Christians! you must detain Christ to-day. And I will say, O Christians! is there not a dreadful desire and inclination to sleep amongst us? And has not a dreadful deep sleep of security overtaken us? I think, we have drunken of the tree-roots, which Adam but eat the fruit of, and hereby we have forgotten our country. O Christians, does not your proneness to sleep, speak that your night is coming? A *fifth* evidence of our night approaching, is, doth not the creeping forth of wild beasts, the abounding of heresies, of unmortified corruptions, speak that our night is approaching? We may allude to that in Psalm civ. 20. 'Thou makest darkness, and it is night; wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. And there is a *sixth* evidence that our night is approaching, and that the long shadows of the evening are like to be stretched over us, and that is, the long continuance that the day of the precious gospel hath

had amongst us: when the sun has shined twelve hours amongst us, then it is near the setting, I am afraid this be our twelfth hour, and our sun is near to go down. And there is that *seventh* evidence that speaketh the night is approaching, and that is, the great contempt done to the Son of God, and the great undervaluing of the precious and excellent offers of the Son of God; we have no employment to give him, and must he not then be gone? I think, few would rend their clothes, if he should take his leave of us, and depart and be gone. I fear there be many that say in their hearts, 'We will have none of him.' And is not this a great dishonour and indignity done to the Prince of Life, that we should all despise his offer before we have life; and by so doing, afford to ourselves everlasting destruction, and continual separation from the blessed presence of God, without sudden and cordial remorse? It is my great fear, that it is a long time since a bill of divorcement was written in this place with many of us; I will not say so of all; but O! does not the contempt done to the Son of God, and the great slighting and undervaluing of his precious offers, speak that our night is approaching. And, *lastly*, there is this speaking evidence, Christ is on his way to depart, and that the shadows are stretched out, and that is, there is such a terrible darkness over the spirits of his own, and that darkness and confusion that has overtaken all, does not that proclaim, that our night is approaching. O! what dreadful ignorance of God is there in this place? O! what dreadful misapprehensions of God? O! the most part of our language, is it not the language of Sodom? Believe it, I think you pray for Christ's departure in your streets; and I am afraid your prayers shall be granted. If a tender Christian in a tender frame were coming among you, he would cry out, 'O sirs! where is the God of judgment, that takes not vengeance upon such folks inventions?' Now, I have not one word so much to be a door of hope, as that in Zech. xiv. 7. 'At evening time it shall be light.' May we not pray that prayer, if we may allude to that in Joshua x. 12. 'O sun, stand thou still in the mount Gibeon, and thou moon, in the valley of Ajalon;' now, do not all these press home diligence upon us, that the long shadows of the everlasting evening is like to be stretched out over us?

A *third* consideration to press you to diligence, is, O Christians! you have a great work; therefore be diligent. Is not mortification a great work? Is not self-denial a great work? Is not a patient bearing of the cross a great work? Have you not a long journey to go? The way between nature and heaven is more than seven days journey; therefore be diligent. O Christians! will ye be frequently asking that question every day at

Christ, " shall I be benighted; shall I be benighted?" O where will ye take up your lodging, if Christ take it not up for you? I think, we propone that question to Christ, in Isa. xxi. 11. ' Watchman, what of the night is past, and what of it is to come? And they answered, morning cometh.'

A *fourth* consideration to press you to this excellent grace of diligence, and it is this, even from the great diligence and pains that the men of this world take to pursue their idols. O Christians! will you blush and be ashamed, when you see one compassing sea and land to gain a petty inheritance; and shall not you be as diligent in compassing an everlasting crown? O! shall the men of this world not only be wiser, but even more diligent in their generation than Christians. O that this holy contest were once begun. Shall those rise before day to purchase a vanity; and thou not prevent the dawning to obtain a crown. O! blessed is that Christian, that can, through diligence, stand on the top of Pisgah, and behold the promised land afar off.

A *fifth* consideration is, the diligent Christian is the overcomer. Would ye know what will help you to overcome your lusts and idols, even this, *be diligent*, Prov. xii. 24. ' The hand of the diligent shall bear rule.' Why are ye under tribute? Even because ye are not diligent, but slothful. Would ye know the reason why you are put to it day by day to cry out, ' O return my captivity as the rivers of the south?' even this, you are not diligent. I shall answer all your objections almost that you can make, by these three words, be diligent, be diligent, be diligent.' There be some that are apt to question whether the devil's temptations, or his victories be most? O! what is the reason, that he never sooner assaults than he proves victorious: I shall give you this answer of it in your name, you are not diligent, you are not diligent.

A *sixth* consideration to press it, is the exceeding great advantage that attend it, and the disadvantages that attend the slothful. Slothfulness kills five; *first*, It kills convictions; we will go home from precious conviction sometimes convicted, but what do we with them; they die without any kind of blessed fruit, and slothfulness kills them all. *Secondly*, It kills many precious resolutions, vows, and covenants at preachings. Now will Christians go away with some good purposes, and holy resolutions: but we sleep them over, and slothfulness slays them all: it is the slothful Christian that is deceitful, and sweareth falsely. *Thirdly*, Slothfulness kills many precious desires after God, and the excellent things of heaven. Yea, *fourthly*, It kills many excellent motions of the Spirit. When Christ comes and knocks, and sends his messengers before him, why do we slight him?

That of the spouse, 'I have put off my coat, how can I put it on again: and I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them:' and so Christ goes away. And, *fifthly*, slothfulness kills many excellent enjoyments of God. When a Christian has win near God, would you know what it is that spreads a vail over the face of comely Christ? It is slothfulness. We fall asleep upon the bed of love, and let Christ depart without observation.

A *second* disadvantage of slothfulness is, it is the mother of all security: therefore Solomon says, in Prov. xix. 15. 'Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep.' O! why are we like those 'who sleep upon the top of a ship's mast, in the midst of all the waves? We are slothful. It is the diligent Christian 'that giveth no rest to his eyes, nor slumber to his eye-lids.'

A *third* disadvantage of slothfulness is, it is the mother of conceit and presumption: therefore be diligent; as is clear in Prov. xxvi. 16, "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason." It is the sluggard that is wise in his own estimation: would ye know the humble Christian? He is the diligent Christian, and the diligent Christian is the humble Christian.

A *fourth* disadvantage of slothfulness is, it clothes you with rags; therefore be diligent. That is an excellent word in Prov. xxiii. 21. "For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty; and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." What makes that change of raiment? What rents that party-coloured garment? What makes you unsuitable to king's children? Even slothfulness. O! if you were diligent; whereas now you look forth as the moon, you should look forth as the light of the sun; and the light of the sun, as that of seven days.

A *fifth* disadvantage of slothfulness is, it is the mother of decay, Eccles. x. 18. 'By much slothfulness the building becayeth. O Christians! what is the reason your spiritual building advances not but slowly, that you are put to debate that question so oft, 'shall ever the cape-stone be put on my building, that I may cry, grace, grace, to it?' It is even that slothfulness.

A *sixth* disadvantage of slothfulness is, it makes all duties unpleasant to a Christian; therefore be diligent. Would you know what makes prayers, preaching, communions, unheartsome; even slothfulness; that is 'a dead fly in the ointment of the apothecary.' Prov. xv. 19. 'The way of a slothful man, is as an hedge of thorns.' That is a most unpleasant gate. I say, praying, preaching, communicating, shall never be sweet to you till you be diligent.

A *seventh* disadvantage of slothfulness is, it interrupts many precious maifestations of Christ. Would you know what is the

reason, why Christians have so many complaints about the absence of Christ? It is even their slothfulness, Prov. xiii. 4 'The soul of the diligent shall be made fat; that is, he shall taste of the excellent dainties of heaven; and the holy flesh shall not depart from him.

The *seventh* consideration to press diligence home, is, I beseech you, be diligent; for many have come short of heaven for want of diligence, Luke. xiii. 24. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate;' Why? 'Because many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.' Know we not that dreadful salutation, 'depart from me thou slothful person, and wicked servant, I know you not?' I add the *last* consideration, I intreat you be diligent, because Christ has commanded it; and I counsel thee to obey the King's command, and that because of the oath of God.

The *second* thing I shall propose, I shall speak to these six or seven things a Christian would take notice of concerning diligence, as, *first*, the Christian oftentimes vents more of his diligence in attaining to a thing, than in managing and keeping of it when obtained. Some folks will be at the pains to get communion with Christ, and after they have obtained him, care little to let him depart away; Song iv. compare it with chap. v. 2. verse 1. there she calls for her well beloved to come in into her garden, and there she suffers him to depart. *Secondly*, Oftentimes we vent more of our diligence in pursuing after righteousness than holiness; we seek more peace with God, than conformity to God: and if folk would examine themselves, their desire is rather to be at peace with their own consciences, than with God. There is this, *thirdly*, that oftentimes a Christian vents more of his diligence in pursuit after sense, than after assurance. Christians will weep whole nights for the want of sense but few take that time to weep for the want of assurance. *Fourthly*, Christians vent more diligence in pursuing after light, than after life; but, O! that excellent ornament of life, which is not sought after. There is this, *fifthly*, that a Christian oftentimes vents more of his diligence in public duties, than in private duties. O Christians, are you not more Christians abroad, than at home! That is an evidence of little sincerity. There is this, *sixthly*, oftentimes a Christian has more diligence in afflictions, than in prosperity. When we are under afflictions, we have some fits of diligence; but when prosperity comes, then we grow secure; we do not endeavour diligence in the whole tract of our conversation. *Lastly*, A Christian oftentimes endeavours more to multiply his duties, than to rectify them. Many Christians choose rather to make their prayers many, as right.

Now, in speaking to this, I would shew you, that there are

six times a hypocrite puts on fits of diligence, and yet may be destitute of true Christian diligence. And the *first* time a hypocrite puts on fits of diligence, is, when he is under the cross; then starts he out of his bed; as is clear from Psalm lxxviii. 34. 'When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God:' but it is like Jonah's gourd, up in one night, and down in another. A *second* time is, when Christ is in court, and religion in fashion, then the hypocrite will put on such fits of diligence. O! what will not a hypocritical Jehu do, when there is a crown to be had for following Christ and religion, 'O come then, and see my religion, and zeal for the Lord of hosts?' But bring Christ to Caiaphas's hall, then will we soon quit him, and scatter our religion. O! but it is much to love a persecuted Christ. Ay, a searching time would make, I fear, Christ to go with a thinner backing in Scotland than he doth. A *third* time, when a hypocrite puts on some fits of diligence, is, when he is under some strong convictions; as in Acts ii. 37. where 'they were pricked in their hearts,' so that they cried out, 'men and brethren, what shall we do?' There is a *fourth* time when hypocrites put on such fits of diligence, and that is, when they are under some apprehensions of wrath: as Simon Magus, when Peter threatened him, in Acts viii. 24. 'Pray to the Lord for me,' saith he, 'that none of these things befal me.' There is a *fifth* time when a hypocrite puts on some fits of diligence, and that is, when death and he begins to yoke, then the stoutest heart begins to grow diligent. There is a *sixth* time when a hypocrite puts on some fits of diligence, and that is, when he is under some ordinary and common flashes of the Spirit, but behold he is not constant. I may call the hypocrite, Reuben, when unstedfast as water.

Now, I shall close, only adding these four things, wherein a Christian ought especially to vent his diligence in: as, *first*, in making his peace with God, and being married and reconciled to him; as is clear in Luke xii. 58, "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him." Now it being a part of the exercise of the day, to groan under the contempt of Christ, and slighting and undervaluing of the precious plant of renown. I would therefore press this upon you, 'to be diligent to get your peace with God made sure, before we go hence and be no more.' And that upon these considerations, *First*, Be married to Christ, because there was never a person in your offer like him: does he not excell all the courtiers of thy heart? Does he not outbid them all in offers? I say, you that are married to any other than Christ. O strangers to Christ! what do your

idols offer you, but he offers you more? Therefore, O sinners! come and be married to Christ. *Secondly*, Does not Christ outbid them all in beauty. O! is there never a person here, that will be content to marry him? I say, O young women! will you marry him? I have a noble husband to present to you. Widows, will you be married to him! Then I offer this excellent husband unto you. Will you have him? *Thirdly*, He excels them all in right; there is none that has such a right to you as Christ. *Fourthly*, He excels all thy lovers and heart courtiers, in reality and love; therefore, O sinners! come and be married to the Son of God, to the Branch of righteousness, and Plant of pleasant and precious renown.

The *second* consideration to press home diligence upon you, and to come and be married to him, is, Christ is the four articles of the contract. I shall read them, and judge ye of the marriage. The *first* article is in 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23, read that excellent contract, 'all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Now, is not that a complete article of the contract? You are infeft in all things, and what would you have more? I shall read the second article of the contract, in Rev. xxi. 7. 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things,' &c. Now that answereth to a Christian all objections he can put against the first, 'All may be mine to-day, but I may lose them to-morrow;' nay, saith the text, they shall be your everlasting possession. A third article of the contract is in Psalm lxxxiv. 11, 'He will give grace,' &c. Is not that a brave dowry? Ay, but which is more, 'he gives glory.' But will he give no more? Ay, 'No good thing will he withhold from you that fear him.' Now, what want you, that may completely satisfy you? I shall read the fourth article of the contract, 1 Kings iii. 5, 'Ask what you will, and it shall be given you.' Christ has left a blank, is there any article you will fill up? Now, I intreat you be diligent; and seeing there is such an excellent well contrived contract, come therefore and be married to this excellent husband.'

A *third* consideration to press it is, there is not a person within the doors, but their dissent shall be so marked in heaven to-night. O! consider then, what shall be reported of you in heaven to-night. I tell you, there is a fourfold report we can make for you? *First*, We must make a blank report; that is to say, we know not what this people will say of the bargain; shall this be our report of Edinburgh? Or, *secondly*, shall this be our report? And shall it be declared in heaven to-night, that Christ came to such a congregation in Edinburgh, and not one person would be content to marry him? Or, *thirdly*, shall this be the report that shall be made in heaven, 'that this people shall be

made a willing people in the day of thy power?' O! shall we make this report, that they have taken it to advisement? I intreat you, speak your minds presently; for I defy all the ministers in the world to give you the offer of this bargain to-morrow. If ye will not give us to report, then report it yourselves. Is this the first person here to-day, that is content to put to his hand and subscribe the excellent contract? Of all, not one person being gained. I say, heaven is waiting for our report, and heaven is waiting for your answer; therefore be married to Christ.

There is a *fourth* consideration to press you to come, and be married to him, and that is, if you will come, he will pay all your debts; ay, he will communicate his secrets to you: yea, he will give you much of his love; and much of his care, and much of his riches.

And then there is this *fifth* consideration to press you to come, and be married to Christ, and that is, the refusal of this blessed offer, and excellent bargain, will constrain Christ to take his leave of you and be gone: therefore, as you will not give Christ a free pass to go his way, and take his everlasting farewel, refuse it not: for this it shall be known who the person was, that was content that Christ should stay, or go his way: ay, by this it shall be known, who is content to marry him, and who is not.

A *sixth* thing to press this home on you, to come and be married to Christ, is, that if I should speak of him till the break of the day, I would be constrained to conclude with one of these four words: *first*, With that word in Heb. xi. 32. 'What shall I more say? Yea, what could angels say more? For time would fail;' yea, eternity would fail.' Or, *secondly*, I would be forced to conclude with that, in Job xxvi. 14. 'These are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him?' Or, *thirdly*, I would conclude with that word, which Philip spake to Nathanael, in John i. 46. 'Come and see.' Or, *fourthly*, I would be forced to close with that, 'O precious Christ! praise thyself, for we cannot praise thee. O precious Christ! commend thyself, for we cannot commend thee. Now, is he not excellent? And therefore be married unto him, yea, or not. O! shall it be declared in heaven, that there are so many dissenters in this place? O! believe it, sirs, Christ will put to your *No* with great grief of heart: but he will put your *Yes* with great pleasure and delight. Now what say you to this excellent bargain?

Now, I suppose there are nine frames of spirit here in this place; and cursed be the person that is under any of these nine frames: I suppose there are some of Felix's frame here, that will say, 'go away, and at a more convenient time I will hear thee.'

Let such go away with the curse of the living God upon them. *Secondly*, I suppose there be some of Pilate's frame here, that say, we have nothing to say, 'and yet crucify him.' Is there any such here? Let them go away with the broad everlasting curse of the gospel. *Thirdly*, Is there any here of the Jews' frame, that cries, 'away with him, crucify him, and release unto us Barabbas;' there are many merchants that will say, 'away with Christ, and give us the world.' Yea, *fourthly*, there may be some of Judas' frame here, 'that will sell Christ for thirty pieces of silver.' O! shall he, who is above all price, be thus undervalued, and sold at so low a rate. *Fifthly*, I suppose there will be some of Esau's frame here, 'that will sell their birth-right for a mess of pottage.' Esau, you are condemned and cursed for that fearful sin of slighting this excellent match. There is, I suppose, a *sixth* frame, which is better than any of them; and O that many were come that length. Perhaps there are some of Agrippa's frame here, 'who was almost persuaded to become a Christian,' take away that word *almost*, and put to that sweet word, *altogether*. *Seventhly*, I suppose there be some of Cain's frame here, when they are charged with this offer, will go and enter to the vain and idle speculations of the world. *Eighthly*, I suppose there be some of that frame here, in Matth. xxii. 4. when 'they were invited to the marriage, they let lightly of the offer of God.' Now, will any undervalue the offer? O venture not to go forth at these doors, 'till you have made your peace with God.' *Ninthly*, I suppose there be some of Balaam's frame here, 'O that I may die the death of the righteous!' O that I may be a Christian in my death; but they never desire to be so in their life: but you shall not obtain it.

Now will you ask at yourselves, gentlemen, and gentlewomen, will ye ask, if ye be content to take Christ? For I take heaven to be my witness; I take the Father, the first person of the blessed Trinity, I take Jesus Christ, the second; I take the Holy Ghost, the third; I take angels; I take all the glorious saints about the throne, I take the stones of this house; I take yourselves to witness; and I myself shall be a witness; ay, though I should not embrace this offer, I shall be forced to accuse you. O! shall I excuse you, if you despise this excellent offer? No, I shall accuse you; therefore delay not, make the bargain sure before ye go away. Now, what is your last answer? I intreat you, ask, what will be the last return you will give to Christ? Believe it, Christ is serious, if ye be content. O blessed is that Christian, with whom Christ has bound up that excellent knot of union! O blessed is the soul that is married to Christ!

There are five things that break the knot of marriage

and union among men, that will not break the union betwixt Christ and the soul: *first*, Sin will do it; but no sin betwixt Christ and the soul. And, *secondly*, Adultery will do it; it will break the knot of marriage with men, but not with Christ, 'Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me, saith the Lord.' Christ will keep fast the grip though we lose it, I will tell you how precious Christ guides the poor sinner to heaven, it is by a cord of love, the one end of it is in heaven in his own hand, and the other end of it about our hearts, and he heaves us all along to himself: and O, but it be in a sure hand. *Thirdly*, Anger separates friends: but no passion will break this knot. O! precious Christ will never be so angry, as to break that knot, tho' sometimes he will overload and spread a vail over their enjoyments for a while, but he is not angry for ever. *Fourthly*, There is this will break the knot among men, and that is ingratitude; but ingratitude will never break the knot betwixt Christ and us. Though we prove never so ungrateful, he remains stedfast. There is that, *fifthly*, that breaks the knot of friendship betwixt men, that is, mistakes and prejudices; but, O blessed are we in this, no mistake will break this knot, no prejudice will dissolve this union. Ay, he that is once in Christ, shall be always so. Now what is your report? I beseech you speak your minds; for such an offer was never heard in Israel. Alas, I fear there are many dreadful dissenters within the doors of his house; and how many shall be marked so in heaven this day?

Now to him that is able to persuade you to embrace this excellent offer, be everlasting praise and glory for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON II.

PROV. x. 4.——*But the hand of the diligent maketh rich.*
PSALM xix. 2.—*Day unto day uttereth speech*, &c.

I Hope I may say with Ehud to Eglon, Judges iii. 20. 'I have a message from God unto you,' and it is this in short, that you would no longer cry; 'A little sleep, a little slumber;' that seeing you have your precious souls at the stake, you would set to work.

O expectants of heaven! what are you doing! I am sure much of your day is past; and I am sure much of your work is before your hands.

There are six sorts of diligence that Christ will not accept of you: *First*, Half-diligence. Our diligence is oftentimes like Jonah's gourd, and the morning cloud; and that diligence shall surely be cast off by Christ. But we must endeavour an equal and uniform way of seeking of God. *Secondly*, There is Jehu's di-

ligence, and that is, such as have self outward things for its end. *Thirdly*, There is the Pharisee's diligence, and that is it, that consists much in outward exercise, and no more. I trow, if we made no longer prayers than our hearts make, they would be exceeding short. I fear, many do more multiply, than rectify worship. *Fourthly*, There is a constraining diligence, and that is either by a natural conscience, or for applause. *Fifthly*, There is a hypocritical diligence, and that is, some do all to themselves, and that is it they serve God with: ay, such shall not be approven. *Sixthly*, There is Esau's diligence, and that is after the decree is gone forth, and the door is shut, we cry out, now I begin to prize time; diligence I love. Here Solomon does set diligence and sloth, the one before the other, that being before the other, we may behold the deformity of the one, and the beauty of the other.

We spake to several things here, and left at this, that there were four things in which a Christian ought especially to vent his diligence in. And, *first*, 'in making his peace with God,' Luke xii. 58. *Secondly*, 'To make his calling and election sure,' 1 Pet. i. 10. And, *thirdly*, 'in growth in grace, that you may be as a plant planted by God's hand. And, *fourthly*, 'keeping of his heart,' which is indeed the city that is often broken down, and is without walls: Prov. iv. 23. 'Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life.'

Now, because of the *first* thing, which is in making up his peace and agreement with God, I shall press it a little, and speak to these two things: *first*, Some things to stir you up to embrace Christ, and make your peace with him, and be married to him, I charge you stand not out against the precious offer.

The *first* consideration to press you to it, is, that it is Christ's great design in many of his actions; and ought it not to be our care to bide with it?

The *first* glorious act wherein it appears, is in his coming down from heaven, was it not, that he might speak and confer with us of heavenly matters? And, oh! shall he make so long a journey, and return a widow to heaven? Rom. vii. 4. *Secondly*, His sufferings in all the things he was put to while here. All his wounds are the silent voice of this, O sinners! be maried to Christ. The wounds in his blessed hands cry this; his reproaches and buffets cry this. I shall shew you by the way, these two differences betwixt the first and the second Adam. *First*, Ye know, in the first Adam, a rib was taken out of his side, whence his wife was taken; but in the second Adam, a hole was made in his side, for his wife to come in, for the doves to flee to the holes of the rocks, even the sides of her beloved. *Secondly*, The

first Adam was sleeping while it was done; but Christ was sweating drops of blood A *third* action is, his freeing us from the curse of the law, Rom. iv. He therefore takes away the reproach of your barrenness. *Fourthly*, There is his resurrection, Rom. xiv. 9. 'For to this end, Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.' *Fifthly*, His precious and everlasting gospel, is not this its voice in short, O sinners! be married to Christ? This is all that is comprehended in this excellent book. This is the contract of marriage, and Christ has set to his hand, and requires ours. *Sixthly*, It is the end of the law: for that is it the law speaketh, O! be devorced to your lovers, and be married to Christ. *Seventhly*, It is the language of mount Sinai and Zion. *Eighthly*, It is the end of all the promises. That promise, "I will give you all things; and all that come unto me, I will in no wise cast out." And what is all that voice, but, O sinners! be married to Christ? *Ninthly*, It is the great design of all the threatenings of the book of God, What is the end of that, "That he that despises me, I will despise him, and he that will not have me to reign over him, I will kill him?" What are all these, in Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii. but this, he wooes thee both by mercy and judgment? *Tenthly*, It is the end of a settlement in his church; and if once acquired, we have no more to do. I tell you what will answer more objections of being married to Christ; this is it, that answers more than if ministers should preach to you all their days, and this is that, that is necessary, it is like money, that answers all things. *Secondly*, There is knowledge of Christ; and if you were needy, you would come over mountains and cry, 'If I perish, I perish.' *Thirdly*, I say, if you were so needy, and desirous to know him, you would not so dispute your coming to Christ, 'You would break through stone-walls,' as David's three worthies.

Now, the *second* thing I press here, is, that you would be married to Christ immediately, and that upon these considerations.

First, Is it Christ's desire to you? Then sit not still.

Secondly, There is this, 'That this is the acceptable time, the day of the Lord;' therefore set to, and be married to him. And is not every thing excellent in its season? And is not a word in season excellent? It is like Peter's sheet, in Acts xi. 5. that is immediately let down to him: therefore, if ye would not be excommunicated from him, come.

Thirdly, There is this, the sooner ye come, ye shall be the welcomer. O! blessed that person, that first subscribes the contract, Eph. i. 12. There is not a delay ye give to this blessed One, but it is as a sword to his blessed bones. O have ye brought this day a spear to pierce this blessed match, there is

not one that comes here with a delay, but he pierces him. 'Think ye it a little thing to be the King's spouse;' and two are better than one.

Fourthly, There is this, that the longer ye delay, the more unfit ye are. Shall God send up to you, and say, give your hearts to my Son in marriage; and shall this be our report, 'their hearts are lifted up against him?

Fifthly, There is this consideration, that he is exceeding honourable; and if it be so, betwixt any, how much more betwixt you and Christ.

Sixthly, There is this, the excellency of that noble Person that wooes you: and is there any suitable array to him?

There are two wooers come to this place to-day, even Christ, the *first* excellent Son of God, the eternal admiration of angels, he is come. And there is, *secondly*, the devil he is come, and they have both one suit to-day, 'My son, give me thy heart.' And to which of them will you give it. And O! if ye knew how many give it to Satan, we might go away astonished. O sinners! therefore be married to Christ.

Seventhly, There is this, that it is the straight way to put Christ away, if you do not take him.

Eighthly, There is this, that it is the greatest act of indignity to refuse to subject yourselves to him, Jer. viii. 9. 'Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?' Now, are you content to take him in marriage? For we have moved so many considerations to you, to marry him immediately; and yet seeing he is offered, and ye have let so light of the offer, now will you not take him?

And there are these five light rates at which he is offered.

First, A look of salvation: and cursed be that eye that will not look to the Son of God, who may be had for a look.

Secondly, There is that, for the hearkening of your ear: and it is an ill vent, that will hear, and not receive Christ, who will be taken for hearkening. Isa. lv. 2. And you say, I will give him twenty looks, if I could, but I cannot. But I tell you, that look is in a promise, Zech. xii. 12. And,

Thirdly, There is this, even desire: and what desire have you for him?

Fourthly, There is willingness, Rev. xxii. towards the close. But I cannot look, say you: I will come lower: and so for one of these prices you may have him. But, alas! I cannot so much as look; I will yet therefore come a little lower, and there is half a look, in Song iv. 9. 'Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes.' Oh then, I pray you take him.'

But there are two sorts of Esau's here to-day. *First*, Some

of Gallio's humour, that care for none of these things: and cursed are they from this day forth, that care for none of these things, if they remove not, but when they are going to their eternity. And, *secondly*, there are some of the Gadarene's frame, that said to Christ, *go away;* and O! what if your city be such, it is no matter though it were a heap; I say, you are doing what you can to put him away, when you refuse the gospel; and that is more than sufficient to do it. Now, young men and maids, and widows, are you content? O! I am content, but I cannot write my name. O! then draw a score for it, if thou canst not. But I cannot get up my heart; let then the mouth take him till the heart come up; and then, you have done it; and I obtest you all by the love of Christ, and the love of your souls, and by the promises and threatenings of the book of God, come and be content to marry Christ; then be of the number of those who have chosen him for their husband. To be David's wife, says Abigail, 'let me be the servant of his servants.' So dare you come, 'and with ropes about your necks:' but let us beware of that modesty and humility that puts us away from Christ: for in Rom. x. believing is there holden forth under the notion of humility; for it is said, 'they subjected themselves to the faith.'

Now, I shall shew some obstructions to the love of Christ, *First*, Immoderate love to the things of the world, 1 John ii. 15. There are five Isaacs and idols that we will not offer up to God. 1*st*, Self-ease and indulgence. 2*dly*, Pride and self-conceit. 3*dly*, Misbelief and discouragement, that many do exceedingly entertain. 4*thly*, There is the grand idol of the world. O! to see such a light as that, Rev. xii. 2. There is the church clothed with Jesus Christ, directed with the doctrine of the twelve apostles, and the ornament 'of the sun above her head, having the moon (the changeable world) under her feet.' 5*thly*, Religious idols, that is, the idols that are truly loved indeed, but the immoderate love of them angers God; these I call religious idols.

A *second* obstruction, is their conceit of their former attainments, Phil. iii. 10, 11. A Christian ought to entertain a holy neglect of what is by his hand, and to eye more what is before his hand, than after it. I think, a Christian ought to have his eye more towards the mark than towards the break. O! woe to that Christian, that sits down when he is here away, and says, 'here is my rest.'

A *third* obstruction is, want of tenderness; I think that this speaks that tenderness is gone, want of Christian diligence.

A *fourth* obstruction is this, discouragement and misbelief, Luke xxii. 4. 'They were asleep for sorrow;' that is, for discouragement and anxiety, I say, misbelief is travailing great with

child of twins; that is slothfulness and apostacy. I think a man under misbelief, makes a more insensible apostacy, than under hardness; yet when our eyes are opened, we will see how far it puts us from God.

A *fifth* obstruction is, there is self-indulgence and sloth, Prov. xx. 4. O! if Peter should say to us, pity thyself, consider rightly; cursed be that pity that obstructs diligence.

A *sixth* obstruction is, there are many apprehended difficulties, Prov. xxii. 3. 'There is a lion in the way,' &c. Now, that is very unlike, for there uses not to be a lion in the way. There are few impediments, but what we imagine to ourselves; I think our hearts imagine impediments, when the devil doth not, and says, 'O sluggard! thou shalt be slain.' And, alas! I think the sluggard's religion is the rifest in this time: there are many convictions, and some resolutions, and some small desires, and no more.

A *seventh* obstruction is, there is the wanting of means, and places of tristing.

Now we shall press some advantages that Christians may have by diligence. 1*st*, It would make great easiness in duties. We make prayer a burden; and why? Because we use it so little. 2*dly*, It will give you a fair evidence for heaven; and, oh! but the convictions of sloth will be great: but Paul signs a testament, 2 Tim. iii. 8. 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day,' &c. And it is no wonder that Christians in our day do so die under a cloud, because we are so slothful. 3*dly*, It is the best way to attain to Christian growth. O! but were we diligent, we should eat the fat of the land, our sloth to us is as Gideon's ephod, it is a sword to us, that cuts the sinews of endeavours. 4*thly*, Diligence is the best way to make up your assurance with God, 2 Pet. i. 10. 5*thly*, The diligent Christian is admitted to many precious enjoyments of God. Would you know the Christian that is dandled upon his knees, and gets the good of the land? It is even the diligent Christian, Prov. xxii. 26. 'Seest thou a man diligent in his business: he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men.' 6*thly*, He is the person that meets with many sweet returns of prayer, Acts xi. 26. Would you know the reason why we pray not so much to an absent, vailed, silent Christ? it is, you are not diligent. O! precious are the answers of the tongue, that are given to the Christian that is much in preparation of the heart. 7*thly*, It is he that walks with most peace of conscience through the world, it is even the diligent Christian. 8*thly*, It is he that prevents the morning, to meditate on God.

Now, I am come here to-day, to demand your last answer, if you will take Christ. I hope you are content to marry him. Now, what is your answer; are you content, young men and maidens? Old men and women, are you content? Is there none that will subscribe? Oh! shall this contract of marriage be sent back to heaven? Oh! let it not be. And this I press, that you marry Christ, in these five things. *First*, If all the saints of heaven were to give you their advice, they would say, it is good to be married to Christ. 'It is better to marry than to burn,' to marry Christ, than to burn in lust with the world. *Secondly*, Christ is very importunate in it to all within these doors: he is sitting down on his knees, and praying us to be married to himself, and shall we not? But must he steal away our hearts? Oh! will you embrace him, because he is importunate? *Thirdly*, There is this, I am sure we are not far from our long home, and then I pose you, on your consciences, what will you answer to this question? O sinners! why will you not choose me? We shall all get one sight of him, and that shall be in the day of his sentence of wrath. Think then on it, and let the terror of God persuade you *Fourthly*, Will you consider the courtesy of the King, and let it allure you. O! what a sweet thing shall it be, when he shall say to thee, welcome, O sinner. Come, think on this, and he that waits on his master, shall find him. *Lastly*, There is this, there is a day coming, when there shall not be a word in heaven and earth, but go and come. And will it not be an excellent day, when all shall be crying, come? Christ, the Spirit and the bride, and heaven and earth, crying, come? And there shall be no speech betwixt Christ and the spouse, but, come, come. O that excellent invitation, Song ii. 10. 'Come, my sister, my spouse, my dove, arise, come, when we shall sit down on the throne of our beloved, and shall sing as Moses;' and Jeremy cries out no more now as in Jer. iv. 19. But, on the contrary, what a day shall it be, when it shall be said, 'Depart, depart, I know you not;' How doleful a thing will it be! Well, then, let us embrace him, and be content to be married to him; and the day shall be, when we will sing to him for ever and ever. And unto him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON III.

Job xxiii. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat.*

THESE words hold out the breathings and longing of a soul, after the enjoyment and fruition of God; Job being

as it were, constrained to cry out, 'Oh! When shall I come and appear before God?'

I suppose, that if the question were asked at every one here to-day, 'Whom seek ye?' I doubt much, that if one in twenty could answer it thus, 'It is Jesus of Nazareth whom we seek.' There are many complaints of private and public; but it were a more suitable commendation in these days, to complain of a lost God, and communion with him, that you might be made to cry out, 'O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!' It were a pleasant and most excellent thing, if we could make this report to-day concerning you, that is in Mark i. 37. 'All men seek after thee.' O Christians, and expectants of the crown of heaven! are you not longing for a sight of an absent God, and one that is lost? Strangers to God! are ye not longing to get a sight of him, that is the excellency of the higher house, and makes all the hearts that are there to rejoice? Think you not that Christ is worth the seeking? I suppose that there is a gulph fixed between God and us, 'that we cannot pass from hence to him, and he cannot come from thence to us, (so to speak.) Yea, some may be afraid that there is a sentence of excommunication past in heaven that they shall not see his face any more. And many of us may take up Saul's lamentation, and say, 'The Lord is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by dream, nor vision, nor by prophet, nor by Urim, nor by Thummin any more.' Believe it, Christ is a great loss when he is away. I can say no more, but they are well that are above the clouds, without the reach of losing him: neither have aiming for such a desire, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' I suppose we might be made to present that mislear'd desire that David hath, in Psalm cxix. 176. 'O Lord seek thy servant.' It is a strange word to bid the Master seek the servant, but if Christ do not seek us, we will never seek him, nor yet answer him: the loss of a stranger to God is, Christ is lost: and the loss of a stranger-seeker of Christ is, Christ is gone: but to come a little nearer to the words.

In the chapter we have Job answering two great accusations and challenges that were tabled against him: the *first* was, concerning his impatience under the cross. And the *second* was, concerning his hypocrisy.

As for the *first*, concerning his impatience, he answers it in the second verse, by two things: 1*st*, 'Even to-day is my complaint bitter.' As if he had said, 'Do not charge me with impatience: for to complain against God, is exceedingly bitter unto me.' And, *secondly*, he said, 'My stroke is heavier than my groaning:' that is, as if he would say, 'Put my calamities in the

'balance with my complaints, you will see the one weigh down the other.'

From the beginning of the third verse to the close, he answers to a second challenge which was concerning his hypocrisy, his friend bearing it upon him that he was not sincere. Do not say so, saith he, 'for I am so sincere, that I desire that God should judge me.' In the words read, we have two things. *First*, The excellent desire and request that Job hath to God; 'O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat.'

The reason why he sets not down God's name, but points him out under the word Him, is, 1*st*, Because he supposed that all would know that none was worthy to be sought so earnestly beside God. And, 2*dly*, because he was so much frighted and endued with reverence and high apprehensions of God, that he cannot express what he is: but as if he had said, 'he is a matchless One; not that he wants a name, but that it cannot be expressed.' His great end in tabling of the request is, 'That he might come even to his seat;' or, as it may be read, 'Even to his prepared throne;' which is, as if he had said, 'I have a sweet end in my tabling of this request,' and it is this, 'That I might come where he is, and have a sweet soul-refreshing joy and correspondence with him.'

From this great request or desire, we shall make six or seven observations. And,

First, That distance and desertion from God is a case not unordinary to the saints: for while he saith, 'O that I knew where I might find him,' it holds out that he had lost God, and was at a distance from him.

I will not stand to prove it, the frame of most part of professors doth prove it; it is written on the most part of our foreheads, 'Christ is gone, and shall never come again any more.' I shall point at seven steps, to which a Christian's desertion may go.

A *first* step is, a Christian may be so deserted of God, that he knows not where to find him. Not only may Christ be gone, but so far gone, that the believer knows not where to find him, or where to go and seek him, till he be forced to cry out, 'O that I knew where I might find him?' Job knew not where to find him. And will not others come in the like condition? Undoubtedly they will; as is clear, Song i. 7. where the spouse not only finds Christ absent, but so far absent, that she knows not where to find, till she bids him tell her where he feeds? And John xx. 13. 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' A Christian, as it were, may be put into the dark, so that he knows not how, nor where to direct

his steps; he is sometimes with darkness in desertion. A *second* step is, a Christian may go to desertion: he may be diligent about the use of means for the recovery of Christ, and yet the means be blasted unto him; he may be about practice and obedience, and yet be useless in regaining of Christ; as is clear, Song iii. 2. where the spouse is much taken up about the use of means, yet her o'er word is, 'I sought him, but I found him not; I called, but he gave no answer;' so Song v. 6. She goes about all means, and yet she hath the same word: and this is a great step indeed, when the Christian is put, not only to wrestle with an absent God, but with a silent God. A *third* step is, Christ may be gone, and the Christian not know that he is gone, nor yet so much as affected with it, nor sorrowful for it. This is ordinary in our days; are there not many of us, of whom it may be said, Christ is gone, and yet we seek him not, Song v. 2. where Christ is absent, and yet the bride is not affected with it. It is a sad evidence when absence from Christ makes us not to walk in sackcloth. A *fourth* step is, Christ may be gone, and yet the Christian somewhat formal and indifferent about the use of means to regain him; as is clear, Song iii. 4. 'I sought him on my bed.' Christ is gone, and yet the bride seeks him in a lazy and indifferent manner. Many of us do not stir up ourselves to lay hold upon Christ, nor to enquire after him. A *fifth* step is, a Christian may be deserted not only in respect of love, but in respect of faith, tenderness and diligence, so as the duties he goes about, may be gone about in a carnal and dead manner.

First, In respect of love, so as the heat of it is gone, and there is no sweetness to be found. *Secondly*, In respect of tenderness, whereas stupidity and hardness of heart is come over him. *Thirdly*, In respect of faith, whereas before he could read his interest in Christ, and say, 'I am his, and he is mine; yet now he calls in question if ever he shall find him any more. *Fourthly*, In respect of diligence, whereas before he could have prayed six or seven times, now he will not pray once or twice a-day. I fear this be almost an universal evil in those days.

A *sixth* step is, Christ may be gone, and yet the Christian not know of it. Sometimes Christ hath a silent departure, occasioned through want of watchfulness, and spiritual tenderness.

A *Seventh* step is, that all the means a Christian may use, may become tasteless to him. When those duties and means, that serve for the recovery of Christ back again to the soul, become tasteless; when prayer loseth its lustre, and love loseth its hue, and hearing hath no life, and we have no delight in those things that serve to regain time, it is a great step of desertion indeed; I shall say no more but this to it, so long as a Christian is de-

serted, he may call himself Ichabob, 'my glory is departed from me;' and his duties, Jabesh, for with sorrow doth he bring them forth.' Absence from Christ, and little affectedness with it, says that it is long to the breaking of our everlasting day. Christ hides his face, and we are not troubled with it. And surely some of us may be put to this question, is there any of the precious company about the throne that bore absence from Christ as we do? Is there any that has tasted that he is gracious, that lays so little weight upon his presence as we do? It is like, we care not for Christ, and there is two great appearance that Christ careth not for us. O Christians! is he not gone? And yet how few are there that cry out, 'O that I knew where I might find him?' Some of us may be put to this question, shall ever Christ and we meet together again?

A *second* thing which we mind to insist a little upon is, that a Christian ought to make it his great design to seek and to find Christ; which is clear from these words of the text, 'O that I knew where I might find him.'

Ere I prosecute this point of doctrine, I shall speak a little to these two things. *First*, What it is to seek and find God. *Secondly*, I shall clear unto you, that it is your duty to make it your great design to seek and to find God.'

As for the *First* thing, what it is to seek and to find God. It comprehends these six things. 1. To engage your heart and strength in the accomplishment of this great and excellent design to seek and to find God; as is clear, Psalm cxix. 10. 'With my whole heart have I sought thee.' I suppose that the half of the heart is not engaged in the accomplishment of this precious work, which says, it is not our great design to seek to find God.

2. It is to be diligent about all the means, that there be not a duty required of us, in which Christ is to be found, but we should follow it; as is clear, Song iii. 1, 2, 3, 4. where she declares, it is her design to seek and to find Christ by the diligent use of all the means. There you see that her diligence about the use of the means is very large, which showeth that it is her great design to seek and to find Christ. And Job ii. 3, 8, 9. Behold, 'I go forward, and look before me and behind me, and on either side;' which shows his great diligence.

3. Notwithstanding of all the oppositions and disappointments he meets with in duties, and of his not finding of God at first, yet not to give over seeking, or his pursuit, but to seek till he find him, as the bride, Song iii. 4, 'go a little further, and thou shalt find him whom thy soul loveth.' If thou go to prayer, and find him not there; and to hearing, and find him not there; and to reading, and find him not there; and to study and me-

ditation, and find him not there; and about all the means wherein Christ is still to be found, and find him not there; 'yet go a little further and thou shalt find him.' Say you, where shall I go to, since I have been about all the means? Be a little more diligent and a little more painful.

4. It is for a soul to lay bonds, ties, and resolutions upon his own heart in the accomplishment of finding of Christ, 2 Chron. xv. 12. 'They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul:' that is, to bind ourselves with all bonds, whereby our hearts may be engaged in seriousness in seeking and finding. It is a remarkable word that David hath, Psalm lxiii. 8. 'My soul followeth hard after thee:' that is, 'though thou run away, I will follow hard after thee, and will not let thee go until I find thee again.'

5. It is to be instant in diligence about all commanded duties, and the use of means for regaining and finding of Christ. A soul that would find God, he must not go on about the use of means for a day, but must pursue, going on till he find God; and when he has found him, he must make it his common exercise, that he may keep him; many of us have our diligences, and make it but of one day's length, and ere two days are at an end, our diligence is past, two days are most of our constant diligence.

6 It is to warn and summon all that is within us, in the accomplishment of this great design to seek and to find God. It is said of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 19. 'Be zealous and repent;' ye would be zealous, I shall say no more to it but this, be sure the first sight of an absent Christ will make up all your losses, or what is amiss; thou shalt forget thy seven years work, when thou meetest with Christ whom thy soul loveth. Thy nine years watch will appear as a watch by night. But the most part of us make it not our great design to seek and to find Christ, and communion with him. Absence from Christ is turned more to be matter and occasion of our discourse, than matter of our exercise.

As for the *second* thing, that it is our duty to make it our great design to seek and to find God, we shall clear it unto you as we are able.

1. It is commanded, 1 Chron xxii 19. 'Now set yourselves with all your heart, and with all your soul, to seek the Lord your God.' This is, as it were, to have our hearts fixed and bent about this work.

2. It is clear from the practice of the saints that they have made it their great design to seek and to find Christ, Psalm xxvii. 4. 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek to obtain.'

3. There is much talking of designs now in these days, but, O! if this were the design of all, to seek and to find an absent God, this were a sweet and precious design. In prosecuting of this more fully, we shall speak a word to six or seven things. 1. To some evidences and marks of these that are near finding him. From the text we shall give you these six or seven. And, *first*, For a person to be under low and undervaluing thoughts of himself, and high and mysterious thoughts of Christ, as is clear from the text: for while he saith, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' he says, he knows not how to call him. These words contain an emphasis, *I* and *Him*. I am persuaded, a soul is never nearer finding of Christ than when he is as the dust in his own eyes. Pride is that cloud that interrupts communion with God. A *second* evidence is, to have high, mysterious, and reverent thoughts of Christ. There is an emphasis in the word *Him*, and it is this much, 'O that I knew where I might find beautiful, spotless, compassionate, majestic, infinite Him! omniscient, omnipotent Him.' Job's thoughts are overcome with the thoughts of God. When he spake of God, as it were, he blesseth his lips. Our low and undervaluing thoughts of Christ is the reason why we seek not him as we should, and find him not: there are many of us that care not for him, there is no form nor beauty in him wherefore we should desire him. He is grown like an old almanack out of date, and tasteless. A *third* evidence is, for a soul to be serious in seeking of God, and seriously exercised about his duty, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' His seriousness is pointed out by his framing of his desires. We but compliment with God, we should wrestle with him, as Jacob did where he behaved himself as a prince, and is commended; if we would wrestle with God, we should prevail. A *fourth* evidence is, for a person to take up the distance that is betwixt God and him. Jacob takes up the distance that was betwixt Christ and him, which made him to cry out, 'O that I might know where I might find him!' A *fifth* evidence is, for a person to be submissive to the doing of all duties that are required of him for the finding of Christ; for so the words may be rendered, 'O that any would shew me the way!' Which shews he is willing and submissive to duty; which is as if he had said, 'if any will shew me the way, I will follow it with all my heart.' A *sixth* evidence for one near finding of God, is, to be obedient to the counsel of others, and to take direction from them, for so much Job's words import, while he says, 'O that I knew where I might find him! which is, as if he had said, 'O that any would shew me the way where to find him!' for so the words may be rendered, 'O that any would make me know

where to find him!" A *seventh* evidence is, for a person to have high and mysterious ends in his seeking to find God, which is clear in this instance of Job: for he had two excellent ends in his seeking and finding of God: and the *first* end that he hath in his seeking is, only to find God, and nothing else beside him, either external or internal, but himself alone, as he was, and is. A *second* end or design that he hath in his seeking is, when he hath found him, to hold him fast, and not to let him go; as is clear, 'O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!' or, as the words may be read, 'even to his prepared throne.' Would he say, "If I had once my grips of him, "I would make good use of him: I would improve it so, that "I would cause him bring me even where he is. Every step of "communion, would he say, I would cause it bring me more "near him, as it were, to make a stepping-stone of it for "more communion with God; I would not sit down with find-"ing of him, but I would cause him bring me even to his seat, "that I might have the incomprehensible refreshing blinks of his "presence, and be watered with his springs."

The next thing that we shall speak to, shall be to some grounds or reasons, why folks, in their seeking of God, find him not: and here I must hint at these six or seven. And,

First, It is because they seek him not with the whole heart, Deut. iv. 29. 'Thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart.' And Jer. xiii. 'And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.' Would ye know why we seek so much, and find so little; it is even this, because our hearts are not engaged in the work as they should. I suppose that the most part of our desires are running in another cursed channel, we know what it is to tongue our prayers, but we know not what it is to heart our prayers.

A *second* reason or ground is, our woful formality and indifferency in the exercise of seeking and finding of God. There is the occasion of the distance betwixt God and many of us, we seek as if we cared not for an answer at all; as is clear, Song iii. 1. The spouse sought him, and found him not; and the reason was, she sought him upon her bed. If we were real seekers of Christ, it would sometimes take away our night's rest from us: but the most part of us had rather want Christ ten hours, than our rest one hour. O what a cursed formality there is in all our duties! that is the fore-runner of some awakening from the Lord. Are there not many of us, that when we go to prayer, how exceedingly soon do we return from it: because we find no sweetness at all in it.

A *third* reason or ground why we come so short in our find-

ing of God when we seek him is, these woful designs and ends that we have in our seeking of God; as is clear, James i. 3. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts." We seek a sight of Christ, more to satisfy curiosity, than to strengthen love and help faith.

A *fourth* reason or ground is, because we are not constant, but take all our religion by fits, and when we are not constant and diligent about the use of the means, what wonder is it that we find him not; for the promise of finding him is to the diligent seekers; as is clear, Heb. xi. 6. "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." If Christians were up early in the morning, and busy all day, and up late at night about their duty, they would come better speed than they do.

A *fifth* reason or ground why we come so short in finding of God is, because of our too much dependance upon our own strength, and too little upon the strength of God; and likewise a resting upon our own duties so, we suppose, that there is an infallible connection between the seeking and finding of Christ: and Jesus Christ will have us taught, that all our seeking and finding is free grace.

A *sixth* reason or grouud is, our abusing of former mercies and enjoyments; as is clear, Song iii. 2. compared with chap. v. 6. 'I sought him, but I found him not:' what was the reason of all this? It was only the abuse of former enjoyments: and it is no wonder though Christ suffers us to seek long ere we find him, we thurst him to the door when he is present, and give him so little room in our hearts.

A *seventh* reason or ground is our misbelieving way of seeking of God; as is clear, James i. 7. "Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord, that seeketh doubtingly." The best way for us to seek, is in faith and spiritual boldness; the which, if a Christian would use, he would undoubtedly seek the good of it.

Thirdly, I shall propose some considerations to provoke you to be much taken up with this excellent design in seeking and finding of God. Indeed there are some that never think they want Christ, and that is the reason why they stir not up themselves to seek Christ. But to press the matter home upon you all, take these six or seven considerations alongst with you.

The *first* consideration is, that one taken up in seeking of Christ, 'shall want no good thing,' Psalm xxxiv. 10. What would you have sirs? Ye hear that seekers of God 'shall want no good thing,' how much more enjoyers of him. If the truth of this were believed, it would put us to a more ardent pursuit after Christ. What want ye, but ye might have it, if ye were seri-

ous seekers of God? Enlarge your desire as the sea-shore, and ye shall get them filled in this precious work, and accomplishment thereof; though ye would enlarge your desires as the sand that is by the sea-shore for multitude, there is no way to get them filled but in seeking and finding God. Think it an excellent bargain to seek and to find Christ. Alas! we take his promise for fair words that shall not be accomplished.

The *second* consideration is, if ye be a sincere seeker of Christ, no case, no condition shall be dark to thee, no truth of the conscience, but thou shalt have the knowledge of it; as is clear, Prov. xxviii. 5. 'They that seek the Lord, understand all things. If thou wert a seeker of God, nothing needful but God would give thee the clear and distinct knowledge of it. And the reason why we walk in darkness concerning our condition and case oftentimes is, because we seek not God to purpose. John says, "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Would he say, is there any that would have their ignorance removed, come, and let him follow me, or be a seeker of me, get your names enrolled in that generation, Psalm xxiv. 6. There is no dignity under heaven comparable to it.

The *third* consideration is, O Christians! would you have your deadness removed? Be much in seeking of Christ, and then you will get your deadness removed; as is clear, Amos v. 4 6. 'Seek ye me, and ye shall live.' Their hearts shall live that seek him. Why is it that there is so much deadness of spirit and stupidity? It is, because there is but little seeking of Christ. Are there not many here to-day, that sought not Christ before they came here? And it is a doubt if they seek him now either; and what wonder is it that such find him not: but if there be a design to have the heart living in him, be much taken up in seeking of him.

The *fourth* consideration is, would you have joy and delight in all contentments? Be much in seeking of God, and ye shall find it; as is clear, 1 Chron. xvi. 10. 'the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.' How much more in enjoying of God.

Fifthly, There is another excellent delight to be found in seeking of Christ, and it is this, when ye are standing upon the utmost pinch of time, betwixt time and eternity, a witness in thy bosom, that thou hast been taken up in seeking of Christ will comfort thee exceedingly, how much more real seeing of Christ? 2 Chron. xiv. 11. Asa mentions it thrice, it was so pleasant to him to remember, his heart was glad, his heart was overwhelmed with it. The day is coming, that ye will not think it ill spent, that hath been spent in finding Christ.

The *sixth* consideration is, "He hath not said to the house

" of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain." Do not think it to no purpose to seek God. He hath past his word for it, ' that ye shall not seek his face in vain.'

The *last* consideration is, the excellency of this precious object we press you to seek. Is there any thing in heaven more to be desired than he? Or is there any thing below comparable to him? Alas! we may preach and encroach, and in preaching press you to choose him, and to seek him; but there are hundreds here, that will take a thousand times more pains in seeking the things of the world.

There are three things in the world more sought than God. 1. The applause of the world. 2. The riches of the world. 3. The pleasures of the world. Many are more taken up with the knowledge of Christ, than with Christ himself. But, O! if all our designs were consumed under this blessed design, to seek and to find God.

I would persuade you, to-day, if you would set about it, you would find it easier to-morrow. And what can you gain, if you lose this excellent prize, Jesus Christ? Then will ye be persuaded to seek him? I shall not insist.

But to him that hath the tongue of the learned, teach you these things, and persuade you to begin this precious work, to seek and to find Christ. Amen.

SERMON IV.

JOB. xxiii. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat.*

THIS ought to be our great and precious design, to seek and to find Christ; " That ye may be found in him, not having your own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ, which is of God by faith." Phil. iii. 9. It is certain, so long as we are here, we are both out of Christ and in Christ, and going to Christ; in Christ, in respect of faith; out of Christ, in respect of complete conformity; and going to Christ, in respect of that endless fruition and happiness we shall enjoy for ever.

Is there any person here to-day sick of love for Christ? It is Christ's love that maketh sick, and it is Christ's love that maketh whole. It is Christ's presence that cuts, and it is Christ's presence that heals. I am afraid, that the most part of us, our name may be read, desolate; and our surname, forsaken. There is a great distance betwixt Christ and us. If that question were asked at us, How long is it since ye saw him? How few are they that could answer that question? There are few that could an-

swer this, that ever they shall get him at all: some of us have a name to be seekers of God, and that is a question if ever we shall find him.

Ere I proceed in the words, ye would remember, what is, and should be the Christian's great design; what is his design now presently, there is much talking of designs, and of men's prosecuting of them; 'To dig down deep in broken cisterns that can hold no water;' in overturning kingdoms, and purchasing crowns: but it were more suitable in our days, to seek and to find an absent God. And if ye be not prosecuting this, it is in vain to prosecute other designs. It is a poor thing to purchase a crown and to lose Christ; to gain the world, and to lose thy own soul, to find pleasure here, and bitterness for ever hereafter, and lose him that is the delight of nations.

Yesterday we spake to a *second* direction from the text, that it ought to be a Christian's great design to seek and to find Christ, and that all other things ought to be but lost, in the buying of this thing.

I have spoken to several things from the text. There remain yet four things that I would speak a word to: 1. To some directions for those that have made it their great design to seek and to find Christ, and have found him, and how to keep him: it being as great a difficulty to keep him when found, as to find him when lost. And,

The *first* direction is, 'When ye have found him, hold him, and let him not go, until ye bring him into your mother's house, and to the chambers of her that conceived you;' as is clear, Song iii. 4. There are three cords by which Christ is held when he is found, which must be made use of. And the *first* is the cord of love, it lays hold upon the heart of Christ, and Christ's heart meets in the hands of love. *Secondly*, The communicable cord of faith, that lays hold upon Christ by his word and faithfulness. *Thirdly*, The humble cord of prayer and supplication: for it is the poor that useth intreaties. When you have found him, sit down and hold him till the breaking of your everlasting day, and the night be past, Song iii. 4. 'I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me,' as if she would say, 'I could not let him go, he was so sweet and precious company.' Compare it with Song vii. 5. 'The King is held in the galleries,' or as the word is, 'Strongly violated.' Luke xxiv. 20. 'They constrained him to abide all night,' though he strengthened them to constrain him.

The *second* direction is, guard against all things that may stir him up, or awake him before he please. Song iii. 5. 'I charge

you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up nor awake my love till he please.' Put all things to the door, that would put Christ to the door. Oftentimes Christians value communion with God more when they want it, than when they have it. They prize Christ more when he is absent, than when he is present. It is with the most part of us and Christ, as with children and a pleasant thing, they care not for it when once they have got a whiles play with it, and their minds begin to lothe it. O how soon do we weary of any condition!

The *third* direction is, guard against limiting of Christ. Do not prescribe times to him to stay with you, Song ii. 7. I charge you that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please.' And so she gives him a latitude; limiting of Christ is a dangerous thing, and that which provokes him much to absent. There is a fourfold limiting of Christ. 1*st*, A limiting of Christ to desires. 2*dly*, A limiting of him to times. 3*dly*, A limiting of him to means. *Lastly*, A limiting of him to designs.

First, A limiting of him to desires, when we set such a time, against which, if he comes not, we will give over hope. *Secondly*, A limiting of him to times; when we will point such a time, for such a turn and purpose, we will not want such a thing. *Thirdly*, A limiting of him to means when we will appoint the way to get such a thing, as if the Lord knew not of a better way to do such a thing. *Lastly*, A limiting of him to designs, when we will put him to it proportionally. There is a threefold rule by which a Christian's desires ought to be regulated.

First, Whatever God commands, he may desire it may be obeyed. *Secondly*, Whatever Christ promises, he may desire it may be accomplished. *Thirdly*, Whatever prophesied, he may desire it may come to pass: but it is hateful not to give Christ a blank as to his coming and going, and not to be indifferent.

The *fourth* direction is, when you have found him, not to content yourselves with this, nor rest upon what you have gotten, but to make use of it to help you to more. Make that degree of fellowship, as is clear, a stepping-stone to more, to win more near to him; as is clear from the practice of Job, 'O that I knew where I might find him!' As if he would say, 'If I had him once, I would not let him go, or stay content there; but the use that I would make of such a mercy is this, I would cause him bring me even to his seat." The Christian's business, so long as he is here, should be to say, give me Christ, give me Christ. He should never be satisfied so long as he is hereaway, till his shadow fly away in the morning of eternity, we are over soon satisfied with Christ, we cannot please him better, than to seek much.

The *fifth* direction is, keep nothing from him untold in thy heart; as is clear also in the practice of Job: as if one would say unto Job, what would you do if you were near him? He answers, 'I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments:' nothing but I would tell him of it, would he say, freedom with God is that which relishes well? O Christian! when, when wilt thou tell that to God, that thou wilt not tell to all thy kin? For he is an excellent secretary, and will help us in our need.

The *sixth* direction is, be much in the exercise of love. Many of us wit not what it is to take Christ in our arms; but there should be a mutual and reciprocal fellowship betwixt Christ and us, and acting of our love in the enjoying of him, Song viii. 1. 'O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee.' But, alas! for that cold entertainment that the presence of Christ gets from the most part of us? Often we put him away, when he desires not to go away.

The *seventh* and *last* direction is, to study to 'walk humbly with your God, Micah vi. 8. When he lifts you up to the third heaven, sit down in the dust, and call thyself unclean; when he calls your love fair for delights, and comely, call yourself deformed; as is clear, Micah vi. 8. 'walk humbly with thy God, he and we cannot be long together, if pride be entertained in our hearts; it is that which separates between him and us. But this last direction may be more fully prosecuted. And I shall follow it forth in eight or nine faults or errors that Christians will readily fall under when they are near God, all which have been their very frame.

The *first* fault or error that a Christian will readily fall into, when he is near Christ is, his preparing and being taken up with some curious questions, and asking of them, or requiring curious desires, when he brings him into the chamber of his presence; too great familiarity corrupts good manners; as is clear, Gen. xxxii. 29. When Jacob is near God, he asks what is his name, a too curious question. And Judges xiii. 17. Manoah falls into the next question. And the disciples likewise, when they were upon mount Tabor, falls out in the like desire, 'let us build here three tabernacles.' Beware of proposing curious questions to Christ.

The *second* fault or error is, when we are near God, and have much communion with him, we would wish that many of our acquaintances knew of it, and were spectators to it. And that is a piece of presumption and pride. I have often thought it a strange word, Gen. xxxii. 26. Jacob, let me go, which is, as if

he would say, 'Jacob, free me, the day breaketh, it will be known that I am with thee, and it is not fit that any should know that I am with thee, for thou art not in case to bear it.'

The *third* fault or error is, when souls are near God, they are much taken up with sinful wandering, rather than improving that which they have gotten, to their further enlargement in the way of finding of Christ; think they, what a thing is this! And their very gazing and sinful wandering draws a cloud between them and their enjoyments; as is clear, Acts i. 11. 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?'

The *fourth* fault or error is, to be more taken up with the light of our enjoyments, than with the life of our enjoyments and comforting ourselves by the light of them. It is not known by experience, that while we are near God, we would sit down and study the light of our enjoyments, when we will not sit down and study the life of our enjoyments; to eye the light and expression of our enjoyments, more than the life and effect of them, is unsound and discommendable in them. Wherefore let us leave off thinking on words, and observe, in the close, that life, power and comfort to our spirits.

The *fifth* fault or error is, an heartless kind of unbelief, as if some were brought near God, and cry out, 'now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace. But look to the bottom of that wish, and the rise of it, it will be found to be ignorant unbelief that they will not get to the like again, if they lose that which they have.

The *sixth* fault or error is, folks bringing down of Christ to the likeness of some other thing, or a little god, or some idol likeness in reputation, to their own mind. And this piece of a spiritual idol, that is in the most part of the children of God, which is a breach of the second command, and a changing of the glory of the incorruptible God, to an image made like unto man. For it is a most ordinary fault in our nearness to Christ; therefore guard against it.

The *seventh* fault or error is, ignorant humility that we come under in the time of our enjoyments. As there is ignorant humility, so likewise there is ignorant unbelief, Luke v. 8. When Peter gets a sight of the draught of fishes, 'Depart from me, saith he, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' And cursed had he been if he had given him his desire. Hence it is, that when the soul is near God, it will foolishly fly away from him.

The *eighth* fault or error is, we often forget God under our manifestation, and therefore limit him.

The *ninth* fault or error is, in our nearness we forget the body of death and sin that we are accompanied with, and that we

are sinful men. I confess, that there is a time when we are carried far beyond the wind, without all sight of sin or a body of death, or any thing below; but in what condition ever thou art, forget not that thou art a sinful man, and walk not without the sense of the body of death. Therefore in the most eminent enjoyments that the saints have met with, there is something that keeps them humble; as is clear, Jacob must have a halt in his thigh, that he may walk humbly; and Paul must have a messenger of Satan to buffet him. There are three most remarkable dispensations in immediate approaches to Christ. *First*, when we go over the bounds, God on the back of that trists us with some desertions, and saith, break not through lest thou be consumed. *Secondly*, When a Christian is near God, he will trist him with some evil or old sin, that it may keep him humble, and that he may remember the rock from whence he was hewn, and the pit from whence he was digged. *Thirdly*, When a Christian is going without the bounds, Christ imposes some bodily harm on him: as is clear in the instance of Jacob: and it is known sometimes to Christian experience. The use we make of it is this, since there are so many faults and errors in our nearness to Christ. *First*, To remember what manner of spirits we are of, and not to break through the blessed bounds which Christ has set, lest we be consumed. *Secondly*, Long for the day when we shall be above the reach of abusing communion, and there shall not be room for any anxious thoughts any more.

1. A Christian may find Christ, and yet not know that he has found him. There is a difference betwixt finding of Christ, and knowing that we have found him; as is clear, John xx. 14, 15. 'Mary, when she saw him, supposed he had been the gardener:' and Luke xxiv. 37. 'they were afraid, supposing they had seen a spirit.' And here we shall speak to seven or eight grounds or reasons why a Christian may find Christ, and yet not know that he hath found him.

The *first* ground or reason is, if his fellowship do not come up to that length and degree that formerly it hath been at, and to that ancient degree that he expected, for we may find him, and yet not know that we have found him. We often judge of our enjoyment by the degree and effect; if the degree be abated, we think we have not found him.

The *second* ground or reason is, Christ changeth the way of his manifesting of himself: we are ready to suspect him, if he keep not the same method and order in the manifesting of himself; as is clear, Luke xxiv. 38, 39. Isa. lxiii. 1. where the changing of his manifesting of himself caused him to be mistaken and suspected, 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed gar-

ments from Bozrah?' There are three several ways in which Christ ordinarily manifesteth himself in. *First*, In robes of holy condescendency, that whatever question a believer proposeth to him, he will answer it; and whatever desire he desireth, he will do it, if it be according to his will. There is a speaking familiarity, face to face. *Secondly*, In robes of stately majesty, as he did to Daniel, Ezekiel, and John, when he appeared clothed with that as with a garment. *Thirdly*, In rebukes and challenges, when he challengeth for sin and iniquity; and if he change one of these ways, we are ready to suspect him, and judge that it is not he. And Christ may manifest himself in the first, when he manifesteth not himself in the last: and in the last, when he manifesteth not himself in the first.

The *third* ground or reason is, Christ will stop a believer's eyes, that he will not know him when he is present; as is clear Luke xxiv. 17. 'Their eyes were shut, that they knew him not.' He will sometimes manifest himself to our light, when he will not manifest himself to our hearts; and he will sometimes manifest himself to our hearts, when he will draw a vail betwixt him and us.

The *fourth* ground or reason is, our joy or admiration may cause us to mistake Christ; as is clear, Luke xxiv. 41. 'They believed not for joy,' they would so fain have had it so: their joy interrupted their faith.

The *fifth* ground or reason is, our ignorance of Christ. Ignorance of Christ, and his mysterious way of working, may cause us to mistake Christ when found.

The *sixth* ground or reason is, want of spiritual watchfulness. When a Christian is on his watch-tower, Christ may steal a visit, and we not know of it; or he may be present, and the Christian not know of it, if he be off his watch-tower; as is clear, Isa. xl. 20. 'Seeing many things, but thou observest them not.'

The *seventh* ground or reason is, oftentimes we mistake the nature of communion with Christ. And hence it is, he is found, and we not know of it. Some think, that communion stands in eminent soul-rapture, and extasies of Spirit, and ravishment up to the third heavens: and if they find not this, they think they have no communion with Christ, whereas you may have much real communion with him: 1*st*, By desires. And, 2*dly*, by hoping. And, *lastly*, by sending your hearts up, and panting after him; which is real communion, though we pass it as no communion. Christ doth often sweetly surprise his own at a sermon, even in the last watch of the night, and they cannot believe that it is he. When they are wringing their hands, and giving over hope, then he will come in sweetly, and say, 'It is

I, be not afraid.' When we cannot be persuaded that he will come at such a time. It is much I believe these three sorts of enjoyments: *First*, The most eminent enjoyments are subject to dispute. *Secondly*, Surprise in the enjoyments. *Thirdly*, Unconstant enjoyments; that is, when Christ is giving a standing visit.

I would press this on all of us, that now at length we may begin so precious a work, as to seek and to find Christ. If all the persons that are not among the seekers of Christ here today, were away, I suppose that we should make a thin congregation: and yet all say, are we not all seekers of Christ?

I shall give you six considerations, to move you to make it your great design to seek and to find Christ. And,

First, It is the command of Christ, that all that hear his word should obey it: and his word is come to you this day, therefore you ought to obey it, 1 Chron. xxii. 19. 'Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God.' There is amphasis in that word, *now*; it says, do not delay for an hour, but set about it presently. And Isa. lv. 6. 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.' Now, since there is such a royal and precious command for it, suspend it not, be not stiff-necked any more, but obey it.

The *second* consideration is, Christ's abiding with us is but of short continuance, therefore we should make use of the time; as is clear, John vii. 33. 'Yet a little while am I with you.' Therefore since his biding is but for a little, it doth admit of no delay. Many think, that they may delay till the hour of death; but a hundred to one if ever they win to repentance.

The *third* consideration is, delays are dangerous. And if in any thing, much more in this: therefore, it saith, delay not. I suppose some of us have delayed so long, that they shall never find Christ.

The *fourth* consideration is, a delay for two days may provoke the Lord to smite us with deadness; as is clear, 1 Chron. xv. 13. 'Because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us.' And John viii. 21, 24, there is a sad and lamentable word, and I fear it be the lot of many, 'Ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come;' therefore delay not.

The *fifth* consideration is, since that your occasion of finding of Christ is but for a time; therefore we should not delay it, but set about it presently. What know we, if ever we shall get an hour after this. We may compare occasions to Peter's sheet, let down from heaven unto him, short and uncertain; therefore delay it not.

The *sixth* consideration is, there is an hour approaching, that

though you should seek him with tears of blood, ye shall not find him, Isa. lv. 6. 'There is a time when he may be found; or, as the word is, 'a finding time.' And often Christ has threatened, 'Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me.' I would leave this word with that of Bildad, Job viii. 5. 'If thou wouldst seek unto God betimes;' or, as the word may be rendered, 'morning Christ.' But how shall that person seek Christ, that never knew what it was to want Christ? I am persuaded, if you would begin so precious a work to-day, and speak but a few words, ye would get him. But there are many families among you, that are the very image of hell; the voice of prayer is not heard within their walls, but the voice of cursing; and that is the experience of the damned in hell; but that is written upon your walls, Christ shall never come near you. To press this a little further, and close, there are six sorts of folk that shall never find Christ, which are seekers of Christ.

The *first* sort is, these that seek him for gain and advantage; in a word, they shall never find him. O! if ye could seek him for himself, and nothing else. Sometimes sense will seek to find Christ for his miracles, and love to the loaves, but faith seeks him only for himself.

The *second* sort is, these that seek him to maintain their applause. Are there not many of us that will seek Christ in company, while if we were alone upon the top of a mountain, we would not seek him? The great Diana applause, is the idol that many seek to keep up.

The *third* sort is, these whose hearts are divided in seeking of Christ, who have not all their hearts engaged in the work, which shall never find him. And now I would pose you, if there be not many here to-day that never sought Christ with all their heart? The promise of finding him, is to none but these that seek him with all their heart. Yea, I may suppose, that many of you never sought Christ with that earnestness that ye have sought after the present world. Are there not many here to-day, that have lived sixty or seventy years, and if all that time were counted, it would not extend to an hour that they have spent in seeking Christ.

The *fourth* sort is, these that seek to please their natural conscience; and if they had not a conscience to please, they would not go to prayer. These, I say, had rather please their conscience than Christ.

The *fifth* sort is, these who are hypocritical seekers of Christ, who seek him only for the fashion; and are more taken up in seeking the picture than the person and substance of Christ; seeking rather to be covered with the coat of Christ, than with the grace of Christ.

The *sixth* sort is, these that seek him to destroy sin, as Herod; that is, to destroy all sin, but that which they like well to keep. Are there any such here? I fear there are too many. Are there not many that seek him, that they may sin with greater delight, without remorse, as the whore in the Proverbs, boasting 'that she had paid her vows?' O such a mistake as this is a sad and revocable mistake. I would only ask you three questions.

Quest. 1. Are there not many here, that never knew what it was to have Christ, or to want him? And he that never knew what it is to have him, or to want him, that could never distinguish betwixt absence and presence, never knew what it was to seek Christ. I never loved an unchangeable fellowship with Christ.

Quest. 2. Are there not many here, that never knew what it was to shed one tear for the want of Christ, or so much as to be sad? And these never knew what it was to want him, or yet to seek him.

Quest. 3. Are there not many in the world, that would prefer a trifle to the presence of Christ? And these never knew what it was to find him. I would ask at some of you, was you ever as glad in prayer, as you have been in gaining some little thing in the world? Hath not some excellent bargain made you more glad than ever you was in prayer? How many are there here to-day that can answer these questions? Oh! that you would make it your great design, to seek and to find Christ. And to him be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON V.

Job. xxiii. 3. *O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!*

JOB made it his great design to seek and to find Christ, 'O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!' Are not the most part of Christ's visits, while we are here, rather surprises, than the birth of our expectation and hope? So that oftentimes a Christian hath occasion to sing these two blessed songs, Isa. lxv. 1. 'I am found of them that sought me not;' and that other song, Song vi. 12. 'Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadab,' Is it not certain, that when Christians are wringing their hands, and giving over hope, Christ will come, stepping in sweetly, saying, 'It is I, be not afraid?' I suppose, if our necessities were fully discovered, we should be found restless seekers of Christ, and impatient till we find him. Necessity makes a soul go out of himself into

Christ. When once a soul meets with Christ, it takes up Ruth's resolution, Ruth i. 17. 'If ought but death part thee and me.' Is it not certain, that there is much distance betwixt Christ and the most part of his own, while they are hereaway? Almost there is not one among a thousand that can say, 'They have sought Christ three days sorrowing; though he be one of the greatest losses, and gain ungainable. What can they gain that have lost him; and what can they lose that have gained him?

We shall speak a little to two things from the text.

First, That desertion from Christ is an evil incident to the preciousness of the saints, not only to be deserted, but so as they know not where to find Christ.

Secondly, That a Christian ought to make it his great design to seek and to find Christ. There are five things more that I would point at from the text.

First, That a Christian ought to make use of, and improve his enjoyments in finding of Christ; as is clear in the practice of Job, 'O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!' Ye see the end that Job would have had him for; and it is this, 'that he might come even to his seat!' Would Job say, 'That if I could find him I would make use of such a mercy: I would make every step of communion an incentive to my desires, and pursue for more nearness with Christ; I would not content myself with finding of him, but the use that I would make of finding of him, is, 'to bring me even to his seat;' or, as the word is, 'even to his prepared throne.'

Secondly, That a Christian, under a sanctified rod or cross, does make it his great design to seek and to find Christ. He is exercised in finding of Christ. When was this Job's exercise? If we compare the second with the third verse of this chapter, it was, 'When his stroke was heavier than his groaning.'

Thirdly, That a Christian best takes up his distance from God, when he is under some sanctified rod or cross.

Fourthly, A Christian that would make earnest in seeking and finding of Christ, will take direction from any Christian that will shew him the way; as is clear from the practice of Job, for the words may be rendered, 'O that any would shew me the way where I might find him.'

Fifthly, That a Christian that is most near this mercy of enjoying of Christ, hath much low thoughts of himself, and most high and exalting thoughts of Christ; as is clear from the words of the text: for there is an emphasis on these two words, *I* and *Him;* and it is this, 'O that unworthy and sinful, wretched I, knew where to find matchless, spotless Him! that finite I, knew where to find infinite him!' And the reason why Job speaks so

of himself, and of Christ, is, because he cannot name Christ, he hath such majestic thoughts of him.

We shall speak a little to the first five of these things.

First, That a Christian ought to make use of, and improve his enjoyments in finding of Christ; as is clear from the practice and experience of the saints, Song iii. 4. 'I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.' And Song viii. 1. 'O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee.' As if she would say, 'I think it a pity to let him go; I would take his soul-refreshing blinks, as motives to stir me up to seek more communion with himself; how would I improve such a mercy!' Song i. 4. 'The king hath brought me into his chambers: we will remember thy love more than wine.

We shall speak a little unto three things.

First, What it is whereunto improving of enjoyments do stand. And we do conceive, that a Christian should improve his enjoyments, and make use of them for these eight excellent ends.

First, For strengthening of the grace of love; as is clear, Song i. 12. 'While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.'

Secondly, We conceive, that a Christian should make use of enjoyments, for the strengthening of the grace of faith; as is clear John xx. 27. 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.' And Song i. 13. when, he has enjoyments, then upon the back of it, she draws her knot nearer, 'A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me: he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.' We may call enjoyments, Levi, and say, 'Now shall my husband be joined unto me.' A Christian should then cry out, 'Now is my beloved mine, and I am his,' I shall be eternally so. Enjoyments are not real, or else they are abused, when they do not strengthen the grace of faith and love, Song vii. 11, 12. It is the very scope of the bride to strengthen the grace of faith and love, 'Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field: or, to the vineyards, there I will give thee my loves:' as if she would say, 'If thou wilt once visit me, my heart shall utter inexpressible love and desire to thee.'

Thirdly, Enjoyments should be made use of, for strengthening the grace of experience. When thou meets with a manifestation of Christ, put such a mercy upon record, that it may be a valley of Achor for a door of hope, and one of the chains that comes from the right hand of Christ to thee, when Christians slight the growth, it is one of the sad things that hath influence on our decay in faith, and strengthening of unbelief.

Fourthly, Enjoyments should be made use of, for strengthening of delight in duty. Whenever thou meets with a manifestation of Christ, study to get up thy heart with cheerfulness in duty and delight in obedience; as is clear, Psalm cxix. 32. 'When thou hast enlarged my heart, I shall run the way of thy commandments;' would he say, 'Whenever I am brought near Christ, and have gotten my bonds loosed, then will I take delight and cheerfulness in obedience.' Song i. 4. 'Draw me, and we shall run:' as she would say, 'If once thou wilt constrain me, or learn me, I would leap as a roe, or as a wild hart.'

Fifthly, A Christian should make use of enjoyments for the strengthening of his hatred against sin. When he meets with a sight of soul-refreshing love in the face of Christ, he breaketh forth in these expressions, 'Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.'

Sixthly, A Christian should make use of enjoyments for the strengthening of the grace of mortification to his idols: as is clear in Hosea xiv. 8. where Christ is taken up as a green fir-tree, Ephraim shall say, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' When thou gets a sight of Christ's refreshing presence, subscribe a divorce to all thy idols.

Seventhly, Enjoyments should be made use of for the strengthening of humility. That is one of the uses of enjoyments, even to strengthen the grace of humility; as is clear, Job xl. 4. and xlii. 6. 'Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' That is one of the greatest advantages to a Christian, to strengthen the grace of humility.

Eighthly, Enjoyments should be made use of, to strengthen the grace of desires: every enjoyment should make us long, and hunger, and thirst, and cry out for more. A Christian's desire should be as the grave, or as the barren womb, crying, 'give me, give me,' and never say, 'It is enough.' All our desires, while we are here, are rather to provoke Christ than to satiate our appetite.

Next we shall speak a word to some practical causes of souls, when they are near Christ.

First, Whether every thing borne in upon their spirits, when they are near Christ, ought to be looked upon by them as their duty?

To that I answer negatively, he ought not to look upon every thing borne in upon his spirit as his duty. I shall clear it from several places of Scripture. 1*st*, It was borne in upon Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 29. to ask what was his name that wrestled with him. 2*dly*, It was borne in upon Manoah's spirit, to ask the same question likewise, Judges xiii 17. 3*dly*, It was borne in upon the disciples spirit upon mount Tabor, saying, 'Let us build here three

tabernacles,' as in Mark ix. 5. And, 4thly, it was borne in upon Peter's spirit, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,' Luke v. 8. And, 5thly, it was borne in upon John's spirit, Rev. xix. 10. 'I fell down at his feet to worship him;' which was not his duty. But to open up this a little further, I shall speak to two things.

First, Whether every thing borne in upon a Christian's spirit, when he is near God, ought to be obeyed by him or not.

Secondly, To some marks and evidences, what is his duty in these things; and that what is not his duty in these, we shall clear unto you in two or three considerations.

As for the *first* of them. Any thing that is borne in upon a Christian's spirit, if he be not conformed to the law and the testimony, he ought to reject it. It is not his duty, if he would compare his duty-light with the scriptures; and if your light be not agreeable to the scriptures, it is unsound. And if any thing, borne in upon a Christian's spirit, be attended with many outward advantages, he ought to beware of receiving it without narrow examination thereof. And as there are counterfeits in these in returns of prayer, so also in this.

There are three things that counterfeit returns in prayer. *First*, Erring light. *Secondly*, Erring conscience. *Thirdly*, Erring affections.

First, Erring light will say quite contrary to what really is the return of prayer. *Secondly*, Erring conscience, when one goeth hypocritically to clear his interest in Christ, will then say, Christ has spoken peace, when there is no such thing. Therefore it is the duty of a Christian to be sincere, that the returns of his prayers are from Christ only, and from none else, 2 Cor. xii. 9. 'And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee'. *Thirdly*, Sometimes erring and whorish affections, when greatly engaged to such a business, will apprehend the return of his prayers is from Christ, when there is no such thing, he would but have it so. Some were engaged after the name of their idols, Ezek. xiv. Some were accordingly engaged to Balaam; and Balaam is so far engaged with Balak, till at the third time the Lord permits him to go on in erring against light and affection, jointly together it is a difficulty to the Christian to be distinct in these two.

I shall propose four marks or evidences for a Christian to know what is his duty, in this which is borne in upon his spirit.

The *first* mark or evidence is, if a Christian, when he goeth to Christ, be endued with a divine neutrality and indifferency, whether such a thing be determined of Christ or not; and in his going to put a blank in Christ's hand, that is an evidence that this is his duty. As, suppose a person be engaged to two

places at once. In his light and affection he is engaged to none of them; he goes to Christ for clearness, which of them he should go to; and if at that time it be strongly borne in upon his spirit, that he must exercise himself about such a place, that is his duty.

The *second* mark or evidence is, if that duty, that is borne in upon his spirit, put him to much humble dependence upon Christ for strength to go about such a duty, that is a token that it is a duty borne in upon his spirit: and if it be the fruit of much wrestling with Christ; that is, if he be in the dark concerning such a thing, and wrestles with Christ for clearness into it, not to be in the dark concerning such a point: and we had need to respect it, if it be not so.

The *third* probable mark or evidence is, if the duty borne in upon our spirit hath not many outward advantages attending upon it; and yet, nevertheless, we are not the more disobedient, but willing it, notwithstanding all disappointments; and no other thing leads the man, but the will of Christ; that is an evidence that it is his duty.

The *fourth* mark and evidence is, if there be a majesty or divine lustre and power borne in with the duty, that is an undoubted evidence that the call is from Christ; which delusion cannot have, neither Satan or any of his temptations. Sometimes Christ will bear in high and majestic power and sweetness, so that the Christian will cry out, 'It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh.' There is ay somewhat in Christ's voice that is not in Satan's, nor any of his temptations.

The *second* thing I would speak to is this, Christians calling in question their enjoyments, and calling them all delusions, and cannot win to be established in their condition. I shall assign four or five reasons or grounds, why Christians call in question all their enjoyments.

First, If a Christian's enjoyments come not up that length or degree that formerly he hath had, he is ready to suspect them, as if he hath met with eminent enjoyments in his first engagement to Christ, and he cannot come up to that length again; he brings all in question, and calls it all delusion. We ordinarily judge more by the degree, than by the effect; whereas we ought rather to judge of them by the effect: for an enjoyment, eminent in degree, may be a delusion.

Secondly, When a Christian, in his nearness to Christ, meets with strange stirrings of corruption, he thinks, O! can such a sight or enjoyment be real? Oftentimes most real enjoyments have the strongest assaults on the back of them. Paul met with an eminent enjoyment, and yet he met with a buffeting temptation on the back of it.

Thirdly, If a Christian's delight in duty be not strengthened when he is in hazard, then he calls them all in question, and says, if such an enjoyment were real, would it not strengthen my delight in duty? But, I say, that after eminent enjoyments, duty may become tasteless unto thee, partly to stir thee up to the exercise of faith, partly to reprove thy laziness.

Fourthly, When after enjoyments, the Christian is overcome with the devil's temptations, he will say, it is but a dream. I confess, the Christian's sorest stroke comes after enjoyments, and the most discouraging, and most dishonourable one to Christ, which may make him go mourning to his grave. It is hard then (if not impossible) to keep up duty; and yet his enjoyments may be real.

The *fifth* and strongest of all is, when a Christian's thoughts of Christ are not more precious than they were before. All the rest can hold with real enjoyments of Christ, but this cannot hold. Only for caution, you would know, that there is a difference of Christ's being precious to faith, and his being precious to sense. A Christian may have high and excellent thoughts of Christ, and yet not know of it; and Christ may be precious to faith, and will be so, when sense hath not a good word to speak. Faith can speak more to Christ's praise in a day, than sense can do in a year.

Thirdly, I would propose some observations that I would have a Christian to carry alongst with him in his enjoyments, that he ought to communicate to none; as is clear, Matth. xvii. 9. 'Tell it to no man:' and it is a strange word that Paul saith, 2 Cor. xii. 4. 'I heard words which is not lawful for a man to utter.' There are some enjoyments that is not lawful to communicate them. And here I shall propose three reasons why they ought not to communicate them to others. And,

A *first* reason is, the communication of some rich enjoyments to others may beget a great envy, as we see in Joseph's brethren: and Christians would keep these to themselves; though, I confess, there are few of them in these days. And,

A *second* reason is, because it is the high way to beget pride and conceit in their own bosom. There is no surer way to grow proud of them, than to communicate them to others; though a humble and sober declaration of them may sometimes be for advantage. Yet there is no time when conceit will more readily creep in, than when the Christian can say, Come, and I will tell you what Christ hath done for my soul;' it is much to tell our enjoyments, as if we told them not.

The *third* reason is, because it is the ready way to provoke to discouragement, and beget anxiety in others, when they hear

such a man caught up to the third heavens, and brought into the chambers of his presence, but they were not; whereupon they sit down in bitterness of spirit, as if all were gone, and all had been a delusion they had met with.

A *second* is, that a Christian may be disobedient to any thing borne in upon his spirit, in his immediate access to Christ, Acts x. 13. Peter is commanded *to kill and eat*, whereas he answers, *not so, Lord:* disobedience to duty, when a soul is near Christ, is most dangerous. *First*, It is against the command. And, *secondly*, against a Christian's own advantage. And, *thirdly*, disobedience to a duty, when a soul is near Christ, will cause and occasion the withdrawing of his enjoyments; as is clear, Acts x. 16. The sheet is thrice taken back again: therefore we should not be disobedient to the heavenly vision.

The *third* observation is, there are three duties that are ordinarily borne in upon souls. when they are near Christ, which can scarcely be obeyed, and yet obedience to them is most commendable, and does exceedingly commend a soul to Christ.

The *first* is, there are some that seem to contradict the promises, as when a command came forth to Abraham to kill Isaac his first-born, which scarcely could be obeyed; and yet obedience to it is most commendable.

The *second* is, there are some duties that seem to contradict other duties, or commandments; as is clear in that instance of Abraham, his killing of his son stood in opposition to the sixth commandment; it is very hard to give obedience to such a duty.

The *third* is, it is exceeding hard to give obedience to a duty that hath no more, but Christ bade me; yet it is exceeding commendable to give obedience to it; as is clear in Abraham's practice, Gen. xii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 'To leave his native country, and his kindred, and go to a land which he should show him, which afterward he should give to his seed for a possession.' And is commended by the apostle, Heb. xi. 8. as a most excellent duty.

The *fourth* observation is, that a Christian would distinguish betwixt the light and the life of his enjoyments, exercise of the mind and affection The life of his enjoyments may be gone, when the light is abiding.

The *fifth* observation is, that a Christian would not have his enjoyments the rule of his obedience and practice: a Christian may be walking in an approven way, and yet have less manifestation. And a Christian may be walking in an unapproven way, and get a word spoken to him, *touch me not:* as is clear, John xx. 17. And hence it is, that sense and an approven way go not together; they may have more sense, and less approbation; and more approbation, and less sense. There are some things in a Christian's

practice in the time of his enjoyments. *First*, He is more taken up with his public, than his private enjoyments: and that he will weep and lament more for the loss of his public, than his private enjoyments. *Secondly*, A Christian will be more anxious to be restrained once in company, than twice in secret. *Thirdly*, That it is easier to be denied to his surprising enjoyments, than to his expected enjoyments: for in his unexpected and surprising enjoyments, his humility hath more ground to vent itself. *Fourthly*, That it is easier to be denied to his private than his public enjoyments. *Fifthly*, That it is the fault of too many, oftentimes to be more taken up with pursuit by sense, than by faith: many make sense their idol, and care not for Christ.

The *sixth* observation is, a Christian should guard against these three evils, pride, sloth, and contempt, which flow upon the back of enjoyments; 'oftentimes wealth makes wit waver.'

The *seventh* observation is, a Christian should observe, that all the sights of Christ here, are but sights of his back parts. These immediate and near sights of him, are reserved to the life that is above the clouds.

The *eighth* observation is, that it is very hard to take up Christ's mind in enjoyments; as is clear, Acts x. 17. Peter doubted in himself what the vision might turn to. And there is nothing more incident for a Christian, than to be in the dark under such a dispensation: in the time of such a dispensation they are put to three questions. *First*, whether they shall weep or rejoice, and praise? But they will do both. *Secondly*, Whether they shall speak or wonder? And they will do well to leave off speaking, and begin and wonder. *Thirdly*, How they shall get such an enjoyment guided? And this is a good and useful question. It is a great difficulty to guide wealth; it is also a great difficulty to keep and to guide Christ, when present, as to find him, when absent.

I shall not proceed further in this discourse, we are like barbarians to ourselves, the most part of us. However it be, it is gain to them that are exercised unto godliness.

I shall make three uses of this, and I shall take in the meanest of them.

Use 1. Strangers to Christ, and the word, what think ye of religion, and that it is heard to reach to it? There is more art in his book, than in all the writings of men in the world. O come, and discern into the deeps and wonderful works of the Lord. This book is sealed with seven seals, but our hearts with seventy-seven. O Christian! comfort thyself against that day, when there is not a line in all this book, but thou shalt know and understand it, and read it; when thou shalt learn all thy divinity off the face of Jesus Christ, which will be thy Bible

through all eternity. Think on that day. Do not your hearts flighter within you, when you look up to these clouds above, and cry out, O! when shall I come there, and appear before Christ? We should be breathing out that desire, in Psalm. cvi. 4. 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation.' And that, Psalm ci. 2. O, when wilt thou come unto me?' And we not look enough here? There is a word, 1 Kings xi. 21, 22. 'Hadad said to Pharaoh, let me depart, that I may go to mine own country. Then Pharaoh said unto him, but what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? And he answered, nothing: howbeit, let me go in any wise.'

Use 2. To reprove the most past of us for laziness and stupidity, that when there is so much to be found in Christ, such an inexhaustible treasure and treasures, and we improve them not. There is much talking of Christ, O! that we would fall in love with him, that ye might bring up a good report 'of that noble Plant of renown.' We are oft-times deprived of bidding you take Christ: for when the glad tidings of the gospel are often told over, people are ready to despise them, and care not for a sight of him. But the substance of our preaching is, come and close with Christ.

Use 3. I know that there are many that are taken up with a pursuit after the things of the world: but it is a poor design. I may compare these wells of created contentment and consolation, to these wells which Isaac and his servants digged, Gen. xxvi. 20. I say, all these wells of created contentment may be called Esek; for they are gotten with much strife, labour, and contention: and they are kept so, and left with much sorrow. They may also be compared with these two wells that were called hatred: and the day is coming, and now is, that we shall hate, and be hated for them: and these wells will run dry, when these living and everlasting springs of delight shall overflow. There is room for me and you, we shall have abundance, when all these narrow springs are run dry; say then with the Psalmist, 'all my springs are in thee.' Mind me to take this resolution, None but Christ, none but Christ, none but Christ, will satiate my soul?' O that there were none within these doors, but who would cry out, 'None but Christ!' Ye would have as much joy and satisfaction in Christ, as if none did enjoy him but yourselves. The day is coming, that you that sorrow now for Christ's absence, shall have joy without sorrow, light without darkness, sight without interruption of fellowship, and all your desires satisfied, and your hope overcome. 'For Christ is gone up with a shout, and is to come again:' he is gone to take possession in our name; 'sing

praise to our king, sing praise;' and let us put to our high *Amen*, Selah, to all these excellent songs that sound upon the harp, on the sea of glass, when all our harps shall be put to sing that melodious song. *Amen.*

SERMON VI.

Isa. lxv. 1.—*I said, Behold me, Behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.*

We told you that Christ was presenting a great desire to you; and is there none of you presenting a desire to Christ? I shall tell you two great desires to present to Christ.

The *first* great desire that ye ought to present to him, should be this, 'Lord Jesus, help me to receive my sight? That the eyes of him that is blind may behold him.' And there is,

A *second* great desire that ye ought to present to him, and that is in Psalm xiii. 3. 'Enlighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death.' I would give you the advice that Abimelech gave to Abraham, 'let Christ be the covering of your eyes, amongst whom you converse,' I would say but this one thing, Christ is willing to satisfy all your senses: will ye come? Will ye have the sense of sight satisfied? Does not Christ invite you in the text, *Behold me?* Would you have the sense of tasting satisfied? Is not this commanded in Psalm xxxiv. 8. 'O taste and see that the Lord is good?' Would ye have the sense of hearing satisfied? Is it not his command, 'Hear my Son and his gospel?' Would ye have the sense of touching satisfied? Is it not his great command to Thomas, John xx. 27. 'Come and reach thy hand into my side?' And would ye have the sense of smelling satisfied? 'Come to him that is perfumed with all the powders of the merchants.' I do think, the most part of us shall die strangers to Christ. I think, if we would ask the angels, what is Christ? They would say this, they could not tell. All the saints about the throne would say so. And all that have tasted of the sweetness of Christ, ask all of them, what is his sweetness worth? They would say, they could not tell. Would ye ask at the depth, as Job xxviii. 14. it would say, the price of Christ *is not in me.* Yea, let all the gold that lies in the bowels of the earth, say, it could not buy Christ, and all the depth say so. Wherewith then could ye buy him? I say, with one look ye shall get Christ.

Now, in the forenoon, we spake a little to the first thing in the words, which is that great command given to the Gentiles, which is this, *Behold me.* O wonder that ever there should have been such a word! What would ye have thought, if all that is

in this book had been in this frame, 'Cursed be he that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law?' What if all had been like that in the twenty-eighth of Deuteronomy, and twenty-sixth of Leviticus? Angels wonder that ever there was such a command: and all the saints that are about the throne wonder; and let all that are here wonder, that ever there was such a command.

I have some things to add upon this command. I shall speak to two or three things.

The *first* thing is, to point out a little the difference of the look of Christ that the saints have above, and that which is here. We are calling you to behold Christ; but they that are in heaven have another look. I shall point out these eight or nine differences.

The *First* difference is, that look we have of Christ here, it is but a mediate look; but that which the saints have above, is immediate. Here we behold him but through the vail, through the dark vail of duties, and ordinances, and promises, and dispensations. O! but behold, above we shall have an immediate look: there shall not any thing intervene betwixt Christ and the soul: there shall be a naked and immediate embracement of the Son of God.' And we think, these that have seen him through the vail, will be longing when they shall have these immediate looks of him, when all these vails that are betwixt you and Christ shall be rent from top to bottom. Are ye not longing and groaning for that day, when ye shall behold him in glory?

The *second* difference is, that look we have here doth admit of interruption; but that which they have above, shall have no interruption in it: there is no cloud, no night, no desertion there. There are no such complaints in heaven as this. 'Why hidest thou thy face?' Or as that, 'It is thirty days since I did behold the king, and I have lived two years in Jerusalem, and have not seen the king's face.' O that look that shall admit of no interruption! It is an endless look that the saints shall have above. And think ye not that the naming of our looks to Christ should make us look and long for that day?

The *third* difference is, that look which we have here, may be abused; but that which is above, cannot: here a Christian may abuse his look to Christ, through the pride of life. O! there is no abusing of that spotless look that ye will get of Christ above. The *fourth* difference is, that look which we have here, is but a beholding his back parts; but there we shall behold his face. Here we but see, as it were, 'the skirts of his garments, but there we shall see him face to face.' And is not that a great difference?

The *fifth* difference is, that look which a Christian hath here,

doth not complete his joy? As long as he is here he is spending his life in bitterness. Would ye know the first day that a Christian hath his joy complete? It is in a blessed morning of the resurrection; 'when I awake I shall see thy joy, saith David.' O what joy the Christian shall have when Christ and he meet together, and he shall take the Christian in his arms, and say, Welcome, O friend, even in that day when Christ and he shall meet together in the streets of the new Jerusalem!

The *sixth* difference is, that look which the Christian hath here doth not complete his conformity to Christ; O but the look we have above doth abundantly complete our conformity to him! Know ye not that word? 1 John iii. 2. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him:' why so? 'for we shall see him as he is.' That look of him as he is, makes a complete conformity betwixt Christ and the soul. But all these looks that we have here, do not complete our conformity. We must go to heaven trailing a body of death. But the time approaches, when we shall take our everlasting farewel of all our lusts and idols; and shall say, farewel with all our hearts, we shall never meet again.

The *seventh* difference is, that look of Christ which we have here, doth not complete our grace; but that which we shall have above, shall complete all our graces, shall not love be complete, when we shall get our look of Christ above, and joy complete? O then, that which is in part shall be done away, when that which is perfect is come. O Christians! what a day shall it be, when faith shall say to love, I give my place to thee; and sight and love shall be the eternal company of the Christian?

The *eighth* difference is, that look that the Christian has here is not perfect in its degrees: when we shall be able to behold Christ, and shall fall into a sight of him: when we shall first see the Lord, we shall begin a song that shall never have an end. It is an endless look, a satisfying look, a soul-refreshing look. There is no work so much as this in heaven. Would you know what the saints in heaven are doing? They are said to be full of eyes, and not of tongues, for this reason, because they are more taken up with looking, than speaking, more in wondering, than expression; therefore it is, that they are said to have many eyes, and but one tongue.

The last difference is, that look of Christ that we have here, is but the look of an unknown Christ, of a strange Christ, of an unconceived Christ: but then we shall have a look of a known Christ, of a naked Christ, of a Christ that shall be well taken up, and understood. These are the differences betwixt the looks here, and the looks that are above, when shall it be that the exercise of heaven and earth shall be all one?

When ye shall be looking to Christ here, these two things shall be taken away, some objections of those who think they have never looked to Christ.

The *first* objection. O, say some, I have never looked to Christ, because I know not the duty; and some folks can neither tell the time nor place when they have looked to Christ.

I would say these four things to them.

First, There are few that win that length, John ix. 25. 'Whereas I was blind, now I see.' You can say, "Though I "know not the time and place, yet, sure I am, I see these things "that were hid from mine eyes before." I would say,

Secondly, It is not, may be, for your advantage to know the time that Christ keepeth in his own hand. It is not always for your advantage to know the times.

Thirdly, It is not absolutely necessary for a Christian to know the time when Christ and he first met. There are some that have met with Christ, and they neither knew the time nor place, nor the first discourse that past betwixt Christ and them.

Fourthly, what knowest thou, but he hath stoled away thy heart?

The *second* objection. I know not if I have looked to him; but since I began to look to him, 'my bands are strong.'

I would say these three things to that person, *first*, Do not cast off thy faith because of that, nor dispute thy love; because there is nothing more ordinary to a Christian than this, to have the spirit under bonds, Heb. x. 32. "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions." I say, *secondly*, The best way to win above these bands is, not to reject thy faith, but to hold it fast. It is a poor thing in Christians, whenever they lose their feet, they let their hands go; when they begin to misbelieve, they run to the land of the living. I say, *thirdly*, comfort thyself, the day of the liberty of the sons of God is coming, when these bands shall be taken off thee, when it shall be said, O prisoner! come out.

The *third* objection. Some, I say, want these great attendances of the Christian: and I say that Psalm xcvii. 11. 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.' Thy light and thy joy may be under ground until both appear together.

1. I say, may be Christ is trying the reality of thy faith, whether thou lovest him rather than sense or sign. I will tell you what it speaks in Christians, if they get not all they sought for when they began with Christ, then they reject all: the reason is, many think more of sense than of Christ: yea, many professors think more of knowledge than of Christ. And I will say this

also, Christ is, may be, learning thee to love him more by faith than by sense.

The *fourth* objection. O, says some, I cannot pray, I never go to prayer but my tongue is still.

I would not have you mistake; for there is a threefold silence a Christian may have in prayer, and ye may have greater liberty in them, than ye would speak like an angel.

First, There is one, when he is most enjoying of God, then the heart is enlarged with love; prayer has little upon the tongue that they can speak. Think ye, Daniel was straitened, when he saw the angel, and stood trembling; and John in revelation, when he fell dead at Christ's feet? Know ye not how a Christian, through a sight of Christ in prayer, we will leave off speaking, and wonder? A Christian sometimes will not get his enlargement expressed.

Secondly, It is divine silence, when he has a deep impression of God's greatness, and his own sinfulness: a Christian is never more enlarged, than when he cannot speak one word but that, Psalm. lxxvii. 4. 'Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled, that I cannot speak.' When his heart writ uncleanness against himself, and his tongue could not speak: sometimes his guilt seemed staring him in the face, that he was stricken with dumbness and could not speak one word. Ye would know, sometimes Christians cannot speak their confession to God, they must roar. Then they are so put to it sometimes, that put a spear to their heart they cannot speak one word. Know ye that word of David, Psalm xxxviii. 8. 'I have roared all the day long, by reason of the disquietness of my heart.'

Thirdly, Silence, when a Christian is going to commend Christ, and, as it were, so silent a discovery of Christ let out on him, that he charges himself with presumption. Shall I speak, we are never put to question Christ thus, shall I pray? Know it, there is more expression in a little whiles wondering, than in ten hours praying. There is, I confess, a silence that proceeds from a spirit of bondage; and, I think, a look of Christ is the best way to help it. I tell you, if your tongues speak no more than your hearts think, they will be oftentimes short. There are some folks prayers, that are nothing but a lying to the Holy Ghost, and in their prayers and confessions they lie, and their desires they care no more for them, than the dirt under their feet. It is a wonder we are not stricken dead in prayer, both ministers and professors. It is strange that Annanias and Sapphira were stricken dead for one lie, and we are not for so many; yea, may be, for fifteen lies in one prayer. Will ye examine yourselves, O Christians! before whom ye speak.

The *fifth* objection. Says the Christian, if ever I had looked to Christ, I would have had some desires to him; for, no doubt, they will be looking for these immediate looks of Christ. I would say these five things.

First, There may be some Christians that may have ten desires for death, when not one desire for heaven: for thou may desire in reality death oftner in ten days, than thou wilt desire heaven in a month. And what is the reason of it? It is not from our hope, but from the cursedness of our heart, as Jonah desired rather to die than to live; it was not for heaven he did it, but from the corruption of his heart, being disappointed by God.

The *second* thing I would say is, one may have forty desires for death, when not one for the death of sin. Ye should desire the death of the body of death more.

Thirdly, I think, a Christian may long to go away, and so to get his pass.

Fourthly, I intreat you, Christians, when you get a look of Christ, study to improve it. Would ye know what makes the Christian long so little? He doth not improve his looks to Christ.

Fifthly, I confess, I think it no wonder that Christians long not for a look of Christ; were ye never put to these three things? *First*, O time, time, that passeth not away to let eternity come! Were ye never put to that, that ye would be content to shake the glass of your time, to win to eternity? That if it were in your own hand, ye would not lay it down upon the side, that it might not run, but would shake it? *Secondly*, And were ye never put to that, to long for your light, 'Arise, my dove, my love, for your winter is past?' *Thirdly*, Were ye never like Sisera's mother, looking out at her windows, and saying, 'Why stays his chariots so long?' And when death comes, ye would take it in your arms, and say, Welcome, O friend? Know ye not what death is to a Christian? It is the putting off of your burdens: the day of death to all your sorrows, to all your iniquities, and to all your idols, to all your anxieties; it is the door whereby you must enter into all good eternally; and it is like Joseph's chariot, which was sent to bring Jacob down into Egypt? Where is your heart, O Christians? Ought it not to be up in heaven? Where is your faith? Is it not there? I have but two or three things to persuade you to give Christ one look. *First*, I have nothing in commission but this, now, what will ye send me away with? Will ye send me away with a blank? O that this congregation, that is much destitute of knowledge, would begin this night! For I defy all the ministers of the world to assure you that ye shall live to look to him to-morrow; therefore look to him to-day. *Secondly*, What know you, but one of you

may break your neck? What do you know, but that may be said this night, 'Rise, undervaluers of the gospel, and of the Son of God, and give an account in judgment?' What would you say, if that voice were heard this night? And what do you know, but it will be? With what countenance would ye look Christ in the face? Ye would desire, that ye were grinded in pieces. *Thirdly*, I say, this night, this very night, will ye be content to take him? What arguments can be used more to persuade you? Is there any argument under heaven that can persuade you to take any thing, that is not to persuade you to take him! O you despisers and slighters of the Son of God! I charge you, as ye will answer one day, to take him; and beware that that word shall not come upon you, 'his blood be upon us, and our children.' And know ye this, that the curses of one side of this book, are able to smother ten thousand worlds? What will ye think then, when all the curses here from the revelations light? Where shall ye flee in that day, when all that is in the twenty-eighth of Deuteronomy, and twenty-sixth of Leviticus, shall light upon you, and there shall be no redemption? Is there any redemption where Christ turns to be the party? Therefore I say, this night look to the Son of God. Is it no matter wherein ye trifle over your time? I say, be serious in this thy day. Old men, what say ye to it, ye that are near your graves? I would say this, 'I set life and death before you,' which will ye refuse or choose? It is Christ that is offered to you. Know this, that be what ye will, sirs, that are slighters of the gospel, that word in Isa. lxv. 1. shall gnaw your consciences, ye shall remember that day when ye shall be crying for mercy, and ye shall cry out, where the slighter of the gospel? Ye shall never any more have another offer. The day was when I was bidden take Christ, and give him one look; and therefore before ye go, close the bargain this night. Ye know not if ever Christ shall come again, and send his message to invite you to take him. So again what is your last report? speak to him, for ye know not but they may be his last words; let us therefore be intreated now to take him. Cursed be the person that will never see him all their days. It had been better ye had never heard a word of him. O! shall Christ in his face, and in his beauty, and in all the excellent offers of heaven, be slighted? Now, know ye, the day is approaching, that thou shalt wish thou had never heard tell of him, that thou had never been born. You slighters of the great salvation, ye shall cry out, 'O that I had never had been born!' Therefore, I say, seeing Christ is in your offer, take him, and take instruments in heaven, that ye shall never have another. Now, old men, will ye take instruments of this, ye shall never have another but Christ? Young

men, and young women, look to the Son of God, and it shall be one of the days of the Son of man to you. O that look that Christ shall give to his own children when time shall be no more, when they shall be led with the Lamb about the rivers of living waters! Are ye all content! Will ye say nothing against it? Then, I say, if it be so, which I fear not, blessed be he who embraces the Son of God; and cursed be the man or woman which takes him not. Since ye are standing before the mountain of cursing or blessing, I intreat you, look to the Son of God, that Serpent that can heal you from all your stings and iniquities.

Now, to him that can persuade you, and will one day stand to judge you, be praise for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON VII.

2 Cor. v. 10. *For we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ,* &c.

ERE it be long, that in Eccles. xii. 3. shall be made true, 'The strong man shall fail, and the keepers of the house shall wax pale, and the strongest of men shall return to their long home, and time shall be no longer; and the arch-angel shall summon all families to appear before the judgment-seat, when the sea shall render up its dead.' There shall be an innumerable number standing before Christ, and he shall tell them all that ever they did. And must not that be the Messiah!

There are three dark days strangers to Christ are to meet with.

The *first* dark day is the day of death, when death shall sit down upon their eye-lids; how dreadfully dark a day shall that be?

The *second* dark day is, when they shall enter into everlasting torments; will not that be a darkful day to the wicked; on the doors of their orisons it shall be written, 'Out of this there is no redemption!'

The *third* dark day is, when they must come to be judged before Christ.

And, on the contrary, there are three days of joy to the godly.

The *first* day of joy, is the day of death, which is their coronation day, wherein the shadow shall fly away, ignorance, darkness, and affliction, shall fly away, and there shall be a pleasant day.

The *second* day of joy is, when they shall enter into eternity. The gate thereof is of God!

The *third* day of joy is, when they shall stand before the tribunal of Christ, and meet with that blessed sentence, 'Come, ye

blessed of my Father.' Ye that obey the first *come*, shall also obey the last *come*.

In the words, the apostle is vindicating his ministry, because of the contempt that was put upon it. And in them are these three.

First, Would ye know why I am so faithful? Because of the expectations of heaven, which he was persuaded of after the pins of this tabernacle were taken out.

Secondly, The fear of God.

Thirdly, The love of Christ, so in the 14th verse. The text place, 'terror constrains me, but love is stronger.' So here are three things.

First, Here is a general assertion, that there is not one since the days of Noah, but he will be at the day of judgment.

Secondly, The great influence it had on Paul, it made him watchful and circumspect; he said, 'We must all stand before the tribunal of God.'

Thirdly, The end why we must come to judgment, we must receive according to what is done in the flesh, whether good or evil. The righteous shall have that word, *come;* and the wicked shall have that word spoken to them, *depart*. Which points out that happiness of the godly, and the misery of the ungodly, Rev. xx. 12. 'John sees both small and great stand before the Lamb.'

Four or five things tell us, 'That we must all stand before the tribunal of God.'

First, The promises that must be accomplished, Isa. xlv. 23. It is said, 'every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess;' this says, there is an approaching judgment. The cursed knee that never bowed before shall be constrained to bow in that day, or it shall be broken to pieces.

Secondly, The convictions of the conscience when sinning, say, 'There is a judgment.'

Thirdly, Do not these terrors that strangers to Christ meet with, when death looks them in the face, say, 'There is a judgment?'

Fourthly, Do not the afflictions of the saints say, 'That there is a judgment?'

Fifthly, There will be a most visible difference betwixt the godly and the wicked, and that will not be until the day of judgment. For clearing of it, take these considerations.

First, Many pass through the world for saints, and have the approbation of it, and yet shall meet with that word, 'Depart from me, I know you not.' From this I press these three things. *First*, To value less the approbation of the world; for the world will say, 'Ye shall go to heaven, and yet shall go to hell.' *Secondly*, Value divine approbation; that is no matter who hate thee, if Christ love thee. *Thirdly*, Study to try the reality of

your state; go not down with this strong delusion, that ye are going to heaven, when yet ye are going to hell.

Second consideration. Consider, that at that day before Christ the most secret and darkest things shall be made manifest before angels and men, Eccles. xii. 14. 'God shall bring to light every secret thought.' It will be read out that day, that which never could have been believed to be. From this I shall press these five things. *First*, Study to guard against hypocrisy, though ye go through the world with a golden robe, yet then your hypocrisy shall be made manifest; ye may be hid from men, yet ye are not hid from him that hath seven eyes. *Secondly*, Think, that secret iniquities that day shall be opened; dark graves shall be opened. *Thirdly*, Study to have your thoughts ordered aright; ye shall count for every idle thought. *Fourthly*, Study to purify your spirits. *Fifthly*, Know with what an one ye have to do, he that keeps a register of all that ever we did, and will read it over, and your consciences shall say, *Amen* to it, Rev. xx. 12, 13. Though there were no more but that, it may put you to your duty. There are two grounds for it. 1. To point out the righteousness of Christ; there are some that go to hell, that have not acted sin so much as some of these that go to heaven: 'He will have mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardens.' 2. That they may love Christ the more; who, when he has read over all their bill, then he puts it away.

There are four things they shall be judged by. 1. Their faith may believe to get him, but their faith shall fail them; 'The hypocrite's hope shall perish;' hope not builded on Christ shall perish. Cursed be the man that buildeth his hope upon the sea. 2. He will try their hearts.

1. He will try their heart's projects. 2. He will try their thoughts. 3. He will try the desperate wickedness of their hearts, their hatred at his commandments shall be opened. 4. He will try their life. 5. He will try their duties. There will not be a prayer that ye have prayed, but he will try it, and they will be rejected, if they have not these six things in them; 1. The right time. 2. The right end in and about them; many pray, and go to communions for themselves. 3. If they be with formality. 4. If they have not faith. 5. When there is no dependence on Christ, but on their own strength. 6. If trembling be not in them. Many pray, and tremble not; and therefore their prayers are rejected. 7. The talents ye have gotten, it shall be tried how ye have improved them. I trow, many blank preachings shall be produced at that day. And, *lastly*, how ye have improven the means of grace, how ye have embraced Christ.

The *third* consideration. Consider that there are two ways of

appearing before the judgment-seat of God. 1. There is a personal appearance; and that is, after death. 2. There is a public appearance; and that is, after personal appearance. 1. That the justice of God might shine in its exercise. 2. For the consolation of the godly, that they who are called hypocrites may be seen to be the children of God: he shall say to them, come. 3. It is for the terror of the damned. The beholding of these that shall be acquitted, shall increase the pain of the wicked. O what pain will it be to you, to see your acquaintances standing on Christ's right-hand ascending up into heaven, and yourselves on the left-hand, descending into hell? 4. The day of your appearance shall be a day of the strong exercise of joy and sorrow, the strong exercise of love and hatred. Many will then cry, cursed be the day wherein I was born! It will be a day of gloominess, and one knee shall smite against another.

And again, O what a blessed company will be singing at that day, blessed is the Lamb! Some crying, blessed be the day wherein I was born! And some crying, cursed be the day wherein I was born!

From this I press these two things; *First*, that ye study, by all means, that the valley of decision be not the valley of sorrow, that ye be not one of these that shall weep and howl in that day. *Secondly*, Study to improve your time well: for as death shall leave you, judgment shall find you. See that ye be not found in an estrangement from Christ.

The *fourth* consideration. Consider, that the sentence that Christ shall pass when ye come before his judgment-seat, shall be a righteous sentence; he is the righteous judge, and his decree shall stand. He will say, 'Friend, I have done thee no wrong.' I know not whether love or justice shall shine brightest in that day; ye shall see it, when it shall be said to men, 'Go to everlasting fire:' and to others, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father:' there will be no reduction of that just decreet. Or, *First*, by Christ that is preached to you now, ye shall be judged at that day; authority is given to him to judge, because he is the Son of man, John v. 27. *Secondly*, He not only has authority to judge, but must judge for consolation to the godly, that they may appear with boldness before the throne, in that he is their husband, elder brother, and friend. *Thirdly*, For the greater condemnation of the wicked, that undervalue Christ, who will cry forth then, 'What fools were we, who did so undervalue precious Christ!' *Fourthly*, It is for his glory, that he, who was destroyed of men, will yet have men to stoop to him as sovereign Lord.

The *fifth* consideration. Consider, that the day of their com-

pearance before Christ, will be a great day, in these six respects: *First*, In respect of the Judge; he is a Judge, the sight of whom is able to bring you to nothing. *Secondly*, There will be many glorious attendants who will wait on Christ. At that day, his train will be like himself; as is clear, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. 'When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire.' &c. 'He shall come with the voice of the archangel,' that is the train that will wait on him at that day. *Thirdly*, In respect of the multitudes that will wait on him at that day: all that ever were since the days of Adam, and shall be at the end of the world, will stand before Christ; and will not that be a mighty train? *Fourthly*, In respect of some great persons, kings and emperors, that shall be judged by him: O! that they were thinking on it, that they might lay down their robes, and take them to another exercise; their robes shall be laid in the dust when they come before Christ. *Fifthly*, It shall be a day wherein many great offences shall be revealed, dark works brought to light. *Sixthly*, In respect of the recompences that shall be made, even heaven and joy for ever to the believer, and hell and horror for ever to the unbeliever, he shall eternally lie under this wrath and curse of God.

I press you with these two words. 1. Ye that are strangers to Christ, how terrible will your condition be! The wicked shall have five prayers in that day. 1. Alas! for the day that ever I heard the gospel. 2. Alas! that ever I took pleasure in sin. 3. Alas! that ever I had a being: 'Cursed be the day that ever tidings were brought to my father, that a man-child was born;' as is clear, Jer. xx. 15, 16, 17, 18. 4. Alas! that I am under the stroke of justice. And, 5. Alas! that I have not a rock to which I may flee. But, 2. what will the answer be, when Christ shall propone that to thee, 'Where is that mouth, O hypocrite, that said, 'I will not have Christ to reign over me?' What will your answer be, when that shall be proposed to you? Matth. xxv. 41. and the first of that sentence is, 'Depart from Me, merciful Me!' What can ye say next? All the sadness of hell is comprehended in these two. 1. The names that he gives them, 'Ye cursed, depart from me. 2. Depart to everlasting fire, with the wicked.'

First, The sentence of the godly, the first word of it is, Come; O but that is a blessed word. *Secondly*, The second word or article is, 'blessed of God.' *Thirdly*, 'Inherit the kingdom,' which is above all the kingdoms of the earth. *Fourthly*, 'Prepared for you before the foundation of the world was laid:' that is an ancient kingdom, where every subject has a crown and a sceptre.

Now we have set life before you. Ye that will embrace Christ, remember, when ye lie down as in the faith of approach-

ing judgment; and when we pray and speak, as having the faith of this; and believe it, all your works shall be put to the touch-stone. Now, to this God be everlasting praise. Amen.

A

WORD OF PREFACE

BEFORE THE

SERMON.

I would say three things to you. *First*, There shall be no confusion in heaven. It shall not need to be questioned, whether they shall come near God or not; for there shall be none there, but they shall enjoy God as much as though there were none there but themselves. And, *secondly*, believe it, I think, we might be content, that this place were our graves, and this written above it, 'Here lies one dead, sick of love for Christ.' *Thirdly*, Believe it, I think, he is obliged eternally to bless God that wins out of the world without a stain, or a spot in his face; yea, there be some of us, that the greatest atheist here may see that word in Isa. xiv. 10. 'Art thou become like unto us?'

O! what know ye, but some that are here may crucify Christ before they go out of the world? Then this shall be written on our graves, 'Have mind of Lot's wife, and of the land of sins.'

O expectants of heaven! What would ye give for a pass to go there? What should move us to stay? Are ye groaning to be home? Where are your hearts? Are they not up in heaven? Where is your hope? Is it not in heaven? Where is your treasures, desires, and love? Are they not up in heaven? Where are your longings and expectations? Are they not in heaven? O blessed is the Christian that can cast up his eyes to heaven, and say, 'Yonder is my inheritance and portion! There shall I never be sequestered from the blessed vision of Christ, God man!' They will cry out, 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! The shout of a king is amongst us!' And, *Lastly*, Perhaps there are some here wearying before we begin. What knowest thou, atheist, but there is as much wearying in heaven about thy service, as thou art about this? O! if Christ would come here, and declare his mind, he would make it a thin congregation, if none should bide but saints, I fear that he should say, that not one of twelve, but eleven of twelve should betray him, and but one of twelve should escape! O how few would our number be! I know hypocrisy may be spun with a

very small thread. There is much counterfeit religion! There is much false faith! There is much false mortification, and repentance, and holiness in these times! Alas! we are but the pictures of holiness.

Now, let us go to him, that can make a sweet correspondence betwixt heaven and earth, &c.

SERMON VIII.*

EXOD. xxxiv. 6. *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.*

IT would certainly require a divine and excellent spirit, elevated above the ordinary spirit of man, and separated from that impurity and earthliness of mind, which makes us incapable of seeing and beholding that holy Majesty of him, to speak to any purpose on this text. O what a transcending Majesty is God! and by how many degrees is he above the understanding of the angels and intellectual spirits! Therefore it were vanity and great boldness and presumption for man, though he be made a little lower than the angels, not only in glory, but in wisdom, to conceive and think that they could unfold his mysterious name. It were more convenient for us, and it were our wisdom, rather to believe than to speak, and adore than to enquire, and to cast such a sweetness in the eminency, greatness and infinite mysteriousness of these things, that we believe they be always secrets as might ravish our souls more to the love of them, being unknown and secret unto us, than all the perfections of all things here below, being discovered and known to the bottom to us could do. We confess we had need to be taught, what, and how to speak of him. Who can order his speech of this blessed Majesty, by reason of earthliness? What can darkness speak of him who is light? Or how can man, that is finite in his understanding, comprehend or discourse of that infinite Majesty? We may speak below the truth in pointing out his excellency as we always do, for it is impossible for us to go above it. This is a subject too sublime for angels, much more for men to speak of. We speak not with holy admiration and astonishment of so wonderful a Majesty. We conceive much of a man's blessedness to consist in the knowledge of God: though we had the tongue of men and angels, and had all knowledge, and understood all mysteries; yet could we not understand this blessed and adorable mystery, the knowledge of God. What more de-

* This Sermon was preached in the West Kirk at Edinburgh.

sirable than that? Though we confess, it doth not consist in vain empty speculations of him. All our knowledge of that blessed Majesty, that doth not occasion fear, and love, and admiration, is but vain and empty. We think it were our advantage to be spending our hand-breadth of time in comprehending him, 'who is without beginning of days, and end of life, who was before all, and shall be after all.' How totally is the mortal spirit of man depraved? How completely is that primitive glory defaced! and that native liberty taken away, while he is confined in the study and knowledge of things here below, and is not elevated to the study and contemplation of that uncreated Being, in the searching out of things here below; if that saying be true, 'As long as we breath here, Art is long, but time is short!' We may go a little higher, when we begin to search him, who is without search, and cry out, 'As long as eternity breathes, Art is long, and eternity is short?' The knowledge of God is so holy and mysterious an art, that long and endless eternity shall not suffice to unfold! We must search and know, and begin to know, we must be ignorant, when we have gone to our greatest degree of knowledge!

Now, there are two great mysteries, in the unfolding of which all our time ought to be spent: and these are, God and our own selves: and we should know the goodness of the one, and the badness of the other. We should study the mystery of iniquity, and the unsearchable depth that is within our own bosom, that we may be provoked to study the divine mystery of the mystery of God, of which all this time we are to speak, that the one depth may be swallowed up of the other depth; and likewise of these five qualifications of the mercy and love of God.

First, The freedom of his love, holden forth in that word, *gracious;* grace having an holy antipathy and inconsistency with merit, and doth shame all price and deserving.

The *second* qualification is, that it is not easily provoked, but doth suffer long: holden forth in that word, *long-suffering;* which doth conclude in its bosom that noble and encouraging property of his love, of which that word, Eph. iii. 17. 'He rests in his love,' is a commentary; or as the word is in the original, 'He is deaf to all the challenges that Satan, or our own hearts, can object.' Love in him, which is not easily provoked, doth, as it were, close his ears.

The *third* property of it, which is included in this, The unspeakableness of his love, which is that noble and encouraging property that doth cut off all jealousy, and likewise base suspicion. This property is clearly included in the former, he is not easily provoked, but suffers long. We can give no other answer

for it, but because he is 'the unchangeable Being, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'

The *fourth* property of his love is, the infiniteness and greatness of it, holden forth in that word, abundant in goodness.

There is a *fifth* property of it, which is included in this, to wit, the eternity of his love. There is nothing infinitely great and good, which is not eternal. That love in the bosom of our blessed Lord Jesus knows no beginning, but eternity: and shall know no period, but eternity! We are now inclosed between infinite love from eternity before, reaching and going forth into eternity after. O what immense love would we stand in need of, that love which knows no beginning, and is ignorant of all period! We must give over all measuring here, and rather sit down and confess our ignorance. O what divine and evangelic eloquence were requisite for the man that would speak upon this subject! He that went farthest in the knowledge of this, put no other notion upon it than this, 'grace unsearchable, and love passing knowledge.' And what can we speak of that which is unsearchable? What suitable expression can the wit or invention of man reach to point it forth unto you? What can we know of that which passeth knowledge? Here is that mystery which is the eternal admiration of angels? They wonder because they cannot know; for admiration doth speak their ignorance.

In these words that we have read, we have our blessed Lord Jesus satisfying the desire of this holy man. It was his desire that he should proclaim his name unto him; and here he receives satisfaction to his desire. It is he only himself that can best frame his discourse of himself, or resolve that question, What he is. It were boldness and presumption in angels and men to attempt the resolution of that question, What is God? We may speak these names over unto you: and we conceive, that though we should spend all the time allotted for this exercise, in reading over these two verses, they should speak more than empty man, who would be wise, can do. What can we add to his words, who is infinitely wise? However, be convinced, that these are but parts of his ways, and how little a portion of him is heard! Our greatest attainments, as long as we are here, do but consist in some confused and dark apprehensions of that blessed Majesty. Our most mediate sight of him, who is invisible, is, as it were, that we did behold a man's back; which pointeth forth a great degree of estrangement; that immediate beholding of him, is the fruit of that land that is above: and O that time would sweetly pass, that long eternity may come in, when the faith of these things which we seek might evanish into sight? Now, with what terror and astonishment should men have spo-

ken, or thought of all the holy attributes of God, if he had not heard this; and likewise of his discourse, viz. the mercy of God? It is more confounding and astonishing than the apprehensions of his Omnipotency; no man could endure it, had it not been sweetened by the apprehensions of his love and good-will: that should have been our speech, which was the saying of one under the sad apprehensions of wrath, To be above God. What were more terrible, than the apprehensions of justice, 'which will in no wise clear the guilty, nor let the transgressor pass free?' Had not mercy satisfied justice, had not our blessed Lord Jesus sweetened the way, how would that implacable hatred betwixt justice and transgressions been taken out of the way? What more terrible than the thoughts and apprehensions of holiness, 'who is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity, and doth loath to converse with those that are sinners?' But mercy hath tempered that strictness that was in him; so that now, 'though he be that holy and just One, who inhabits eternity, yet he is content to dwell with sinners, and to have his tabernacle with men.' We think, among all these blessed mysteries that mercy hath produced and brought to light, these are two; *first*, that God, who is light, and who is holiness itself, should condescend to have communion with those, 'who drink in iniquity as water.' *Secondly*, This likewise is a mystery, that God, who is light, should converse with man, who is so full of spots and blemishes, and yet not be defiled. We may be afraid to multiply our words of him. It involves an eternal and everlasting contradiction, and impossibility to unfold this attribute of the mercy of God. We think, it is not ignorance, but the greatest degree of knowledge, that makes us give our assent to that great truth, that his love to us is wonderful, passing the love of women! There is a great difference betwixt the mysteries of nature, and the mysteries of religion. The more we search for the mysteries of nature, they are the more plain and distinct to us: but the more we search for the mysteries of religion, the more mysterious and dark do they appear. We conceive, that the souls of just men now made perfect, would speak to that truth with great assurance, that his grace and mercy is more unsearchable, than it was the first day they began to study it. All our knowledge of that blessed attribute doth consist in this, to know 'that it passeth knowledge.' Light is not here the daughter of time, neither is light here the daughter of eternity. We shall still remain ignorant of this holy and blessed mystery. O to search, till we find it to be above search; and to know it, 'till we find it passing knowledge.'

Now, we shall speak to this attribute of mercy in these heads.

I. We shall propose some considerations and thoughts, that

we would have the Christian minding when he begins to study the mercy and love of God.

II. We shall propose some ways and means, how a Christian shall attain unto the solid knowledge of this attribute of mercy.

III. We shall speak of the qualifications of the mercy and love of God.

IV. We shall speak a little to these advantages that a Christian may have by the solid faith and apprehension of the mercy and love of God.

V. We shall point out some great impediments, that are the occasion why we make so small a progress in the faith of this attribute of mercy. Then,

I. These considerations and thoughts, that a Christian should have when he begins to study the attribute of mercy.

The *first* is this. be much in the consideration of his highness and absolute sovereignty. We think, this method is in some part holden forth to us, that before God doth propose his name of mercy, he doth take unto himself the name of Jehovah, which points forth unto us his highness. We think, your faith upon the mercy of God, without the solid apprehension of the highness of God, doth degenerate into presumption, and makes the Christian to pass these ways and coverings that are fixed between that infinite Majesty, and those who are the dust of his feet. We should always think, that the thoughts of his highness do not diminish nor impair the thoughts of his mercy, lest our faith should be degenerate into an anxious misbelief, and discouragement of spirit: knowing, that though he be great, yet he is good; though he be that majestic One, yet know that he is merciful. Now the advantage that a Christian may have by taking this along with him, when he begins to study this attribute of mercy, is this:

First, All the mercies we receive from God, they shall seem wondrous unto us, when we have our thoughts much taken up with his highness. We think, there is no mercy that a Christian doth meet with, but it may commend itself; but this superadded circumstance, it is from that high and holy One that inhabits eternity, makes a wonder to Christians! This was the way that Mary took to heighten and magnify his mercy to her, Luke i. 49. 'He that is mighty hath done to me great things, and holy is his name. The apprehensions of his highness made her to put higher note of respect and estimation upon her favours that she received: this was likewise the practice of holy David, 2 Sam. vii. 18. 'Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' There is a strange emphasis in that word, *Thou*, importing thus much, 'That though I had

received that favour from another, it should not have been marvellous in mine eyes; but coming from thee, it doth occasion admiration.'

The *second* advantage that a Christian doth reap, by taking along with him the thoughts of God's highness, when he begins to study the mercy and love of God, is this, the thoughts of his highness doth humble the Christian, and compose the spirit with holy fear and reverence; which are a preparatory for the Christian's laying hold on mercy. We must sit down and cover our lips, and cry out, 'We are unclean:' we must make our dwelling in the dust, before mercy should visit us. Highness in God must humble the Christian, and bring him low in his own estimation before mercy do exalt and set him on high. We must subscribe the law, before we subscribe the gospel. We must dwell all upon mount Ebal, which was the mount of cursing, and cry forth against ourselves, 'cursed be he that continueth not in all things that are written in the law: before we dare venture to dwell upon mount Gerizzim, which was the mount of blessings, and draw forth that conclusion, 'blessed is that man whose God is the Lord.' We must sit low through the consideration of his highness, before we can be exalted on high by the consideration of his mercy. Half-representations of God are always false representations of him. We think, if we look upon his highness, and take him up as clothed with righteousness, as with a robe, and doth not likewise take him up as clothed with mercy, we shall fall in some extremity.

The *third* advantage by this method, is this, it makes a Christian stand in awe of the goodness of God. What is the great reason that we turn the grace of God into wantonness? Is it not because of the want of the solid faith of his highness more engraven upon our spirits? Fear to offend his goodness, and to provoke that glorious and terrible name, 'The Lord our God.' It should be more in request with us. These are two inseparable companions, the faith of his highness, and the fear to offend this God; they die and live together, they wax and decay together: we may allude to that word, 2 Sam. i. 23. 'They were pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided.'

The *second* consideration which we would have the Christian to take along with him when he begins to study the mercy and love of God, is this; know that it is natural and native for him to love; justice is his strange act, Isa. xxviii. 21. Importing his great unwillingness to be much taken up in the exercise of that attribute of justice. If we would ask the question, What God is? We could have no answer so suitable and pertinent to it, as that which he hath given himself, 'He is merciful and loving.' In

is his great design, and likewise his desire to be taken up in his attribute of mercy. Had not man fallen from that blessed subordination unto the holy will of God, we should not have known what it is to behold the exercise of that attribute of mercy. But man, by his fall, did close the door upon mercy, and open a door unto justice, that he might take vengeance on what ones were not made perfect: for man found out many inventions unto himself. And we conceive, that which doth eminently declare how much he delights in mercy, and how natural it is for him to love, is this, that notwithstanding there was a strong and invincible impediment laid in the way of the exercise of the attributes of mercy, which if angels and men had attempted to have loosed, should eternally have crushed and depressed them into the lowest hell. Yet love was not hindered in its exercise by this strong impediment. O blessed be that love, for it was strong; and that good-will, for it was wonderful; that when there was such an impediment laid in the way, did put wisdom in exercise to find out the way how it might exercise itself towards man, without leaving an imputation on justice! It likewise put Omnipotent power to exercise, that it might exercise the decrees of wisdom, that were such a holy and divine impotence on the love of God, that before the curse was proclaimed towards man, for the breach of his holy law, love did propose the way how that everlasting curse, which man by his own hand had wrapped about his own neck, might be taken away: now Christians, by the consideration of this, may receive three advantages.

First, We may be convinced, when we are under a rod and correction for sin, of the guiltiness of our sin; we may say that which Eliphaz said, 'Is not our sin great, and our transgressions infinite?' When he, who delights in mercy, begins to strike, he doth, as it were, contradict his own delights. When he begins to take vengeance on man for his inventions, he is clothed with a holy reluctancy to punish those whom he has loved.

The *second* advantage is this, it is a notable help to remove our unbelief, and the discouragement of our spirits, which we contradict by the reflecting on our iniquities, and the abominations of our hearts. We think we may multiply the causes of our unbelief; but all of them may be reduced unto this, the want of the solid faith of this, that he is one that delights in mercy! Were the divine light of his holy truth more darted in upon our hearts, all our misbelief should soon evanish, and remove out of the way. These, as it were, by not employing his mercy, do put off a piece of his delight, that it is his rejoicing to magnify his mercy towards men! And it is his great regret that sinners will not come.

The *third* advantage is this, it is a strong provocation unto the faith of the promises. We think, that the reason why we exercise faith so little upon the precious words of promise, is one of these two, *first*, Either the want of the solid faith of his Omnipotency, and that he is one from whom no thoughts can be hidden or withholden, and to whom there is nothing too hard. This was the occasion of Zacharias's unbelief, Luke i. 18. 'How shall such a thing be?' His finite and shallow reason could not reach a possibility of the being of these things which were above nature. Or, *secondly*, the reason of our misbelief is, the want of the solid faith of that infinite goodness and delight that is in him to do good to us.

The *fourth* advantage that a Christian may have by this is, it is a strong provocation to a Christian, after he hath fallen by his iniquity, and hath played the harlot with many lovers, yet to return unto him, who is merciful, and doth not retain his anger for ever. This was the argument that our blessed Lord used to these in Jer. iii. 12. 'Return to me, saith the Lord, O backsliding Israel, for I am merciful, and will not keep anger for ever.' We think, it is a small mends, after we have wearied ourselves in the greatness of our way, therefore come, and let us return unto him, who is merciful, and doth not retain his anger for ever. We shall only say this by the way, that when ye are overtaken in any snare, do not quite your faith of your interest in God; when ye lose your feet, do not lose your grips. We think, the edge and strength of convictions are taken off, when the faith of our interest is removed; we think there is nothing so confounding and astonishing to the Christian, as that he should have provoked him, we shall not speak any more, but desire that ye may go down in this depth, and behold the wonders of the Lord. O but it were a sweet and holy diversion of all our anxious thoughts, to be solacing ourselves in the blessed contemplations of the mercy and love of God! This would make time short and long. It would make it long, for ye should be breathing after the day, when ye should know this love more. It would make time short, for that perfect solace that ye should have in it. The thoughts of his love should make you forget your misery, and remember your povery no more, if we belong to him. Time and eternity should be spent in the study of this holy and delectable mystery. We think, that all our idols should soon be hanged; our idols of faith, if we had the faith of his mercy. Our idols of love, if we had the faith of his mercy: our idols of fear, if we had the faith of his mercy. Whom should we trust but God? Whom should we love but God? Whom should we fear but God? We think that Christianity,

in leaving the world and all things that are here, and desiring to take God for our portion. O when shall there be such a holy and divine captivity of all the desires of our spirits, as to have them taken up in the consideration of him, who is mercy, and love, and goodness!

Now to him who is love, be praise in heaven and earth. Amen.

SERMON IX.

MAL. iii. 6. *For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*

IT is an unchangeable and irrevocable statute of heaven, that cannot be recalled, that as long as we are here below in the land of our exile, being strangers from our Father's house, we must live by faith, and not by sight. Therefore we must submit unto these dark discoveries of those things that we have, that are most precious and excellent, until that day shall be, when faith, that is the evidence of things not seen, shall sweetly be changed into an immediate beholding of them. And O what a blessed day shall that be, when faith and hope shall both cease, and give way to sight! when these two cardinal graces shall go to take their leave of us, and sense shall go in, and we then shall eternally solace ourselves in beholding of him that is now invisible; and sense shall solace itself in these sweet fruits and trophies of the victory of faith and hope! O the infinite satisfaction and joy these have, that have their dwelling there! such new wine as they drink of, must not be put into such old bottles as we are, else we would burst asunder. 'But new wine must be put into new bottles, that both of them may be preserved.' And if he would condescend to draw by a lap of that vail, wherewith he is now covered from our eyes, and that he should now appear in the glory of his unspeakable Majesty, we should all fall dead at his feet, and there should no more strength remain with us. It were a question difficult to determine, whether the most pleasant manifestations that God can give of himself to his own, whilst they are here below, should provoke more joy than reverence, and more fear than rejoicing? And sure we are, fear of him who is that unchangeable Majesty, is more suitable for us whilst we are here, than to rejoice and be glad. O that unsuitableness we are under, which renders us so incapable, were once removed, and taken out of the way, and we for ever advanced to that unspeakable dignity, 'as to see him as he is!' We must say by the way, O what is that one word, 'To see God as he is?'

We must delay the exposition of it, until we have the pos-

session of it. There is more, no doubt, in that word, than angels can make language of. If those of the higher-house were commanded to write a commentary of this one promise, 'That we shall see God as he is;' they might close all their expositions of it to us in this, *Come and see;* he can best resolve you himself. Now all that we have been formerly speaking of God, and of his blessed attributes, which is the main scope and design, that at least we ought to propose in speaking of so divine and profound a name is, 'That you might be once persuaded to study and exalt him, before whom all the inhabitants of the world are reputed as nothing, and who rules in the kingdoms of men, *were many of us* but driven from among men unto beasts, till seven times pass over us, and we made to acknowledge God to be the most high,' we might acknowledge his justice, and show forth his praise, which is the supreme end why we had a being. But there are many among us, that go from our being before that we get to know why we had a being; God has given us immortal souls, 'and made us wiser than the beasts of the field;' but there is not one among a thousand that takes up his dignity, and he may take up his lamentation, 'Man being in honour, and knoweth it not, is like the beasts that perish.'

That which we now shall speak of is, that glorious and incomparable attribute of his unchangeableness, a subject more fit for angels to speak of than men; and it is clear in these words, 'I am the Lord, I change not; he is that everlasting rock of ages, that though all things here should stagger to and fro as a drunken man, yet he remains the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever; with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of change.' Changeableness is the note of all things here below: but he takes here to himself a more excellent name, and who can debate that which he hath spoken? 'Though the sun should not give light by day, nor the moon and stars by night, and the sea shall pass its bounds; yet he is that immutable and unchangeable Being with whom there is no changeableness.' O what can changeable man speak of the unchangeable being of God? No doubt, were our spirits under a more divine impression of this attribute, the unchangeableness of God, we might speak to you with more advantage, and you might likewise hear with more rejoicing. But if each of you that are here, were posed with this question, who of you have your spirits under an impression of this attribute of God's unchangeableness? we think there shall be few or none found to give a positive answer to this question. That which proceeds from the heart, affects the man most; and if we did speak, because we knew such, we might often speak less, and wonder more. O to be much taken up in

a divine reflection and meditation upon this glorious attribute, the unchangeableness of God? which is that pillar of hope to which our faith must lean, when sense is lost, and we ready to draw that conclusion, 'that our spots are not like the spots of his people.' And likewise, there is none of the saints from which we can expect help, neither would they answer us, tho' we should call upon them. Then we must solace ourselves quietly upon this rock; often 'we stir him up, and awake him before he please.' But he is willing, and often passes an act of oblivion to all our former offences, and does condescend to drown all the differences betwixt him and us, in that immense love of his good-will. Were God as changeable as we are, how soon should we get a bill of divorcement in our hands, and we should soon dote on other lovers: but when we have lost our grips, and let them go, these everlasting arms of his do take us up. There is an unchangeableness in his decrees that cannot be altered, as it is spoken of the laws of the Medes and Persians; that love of his admits of no period. He doth so graciously condescend to his own, that when they have been playing the harlot with many lovers, yet his unchangeable love doth embrace them, 'return unto me, O Israel! O such a blessed accepting, yet 'return unto me, O Israel?' And such sometimes have been forced to cry out, 'I am not worthy to be called thy son,' &c. And some have supposed, when their prison-doors have been cast open, and when their chains have fallen off their feet, they have supposed with themselves, that they had seen a vision: and others, when they were loosed from their captivity, they have been as men that dreamed. O when that challenge shall be proposed to us, that are like a barren wilderness in all these things that he doth to us, when he shall pose us with that question, 'For which of these good works that I have done to you, do you take up stones against me?' We may confess, and give him that testimony, when we are at ourselves, and have wronged him, as that word, Luke xv. 16, 17. 'And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?' It is more for our advantage to remain with him, than to go elsewhere. When he hath been desiring us to return, we have wearied ourselves in pursuing after our idols, 'and filled ourselves with love until the morning, and with delight until the dawning of the day.'

Now, for clearing more of this attribute, we would, better for the quality of it, cut off much of the quantity of our discourse about it, that we be not rash with our mouths in the hasty uttering of words. 'By the multitude of words, a fool's

voice is known.' When we do seriously reflect on the unchangebleness of God, that he is such a One, notwithstanding of all his infinite works and varieties of dispensations that comes from him, yet he remains unchangeable. All things remain in a circuit of being, and not being: and even such things, when they have a being, remain unchangeable. Now to speak of his unchangeableness, it is so held forth, that he is void of all variableness and corruptness, and that he, in his blessed purpose of his good-will, is void of any shadow of changeableness: he is unchangeable in his essence, in respect of this, that he is void of, and cannot be subject to corruption. The eternity of God doth sufficiently prove his being, that it is impossible for him not to be; that though all things should not be, yet he is to the fore. He takes to himself that glorious attribute, first and last: he taking to himself in that glorious essence, that he is void of all alteration, and infinitely perfect, proves sufficiently his being both sufficient and all-sufficient. Wherein can a man be profitable to God? Neither can his perfections be found out. He is likewise infinite in his omnipotency; no power can be added to him, nor taken away from him. He is likewise infinite in his understanding and knowledge, all things are known unto him from the beginning of the world, he having a most comprehensive and distinct knowledge of all things; and having also a most perfect and sure knowledge, without all reach of error. For these things that occasion error, are altogether removed from him. He is so infinite in understanding, that all things that are, or have been, or shall be, or may be, are as easy to him as these things that are most obvious to, or comprehensive by us. He is likewise unchangeable in his love, John xiii. 1. whom he loves, he loves unto the end. We often, through our misconstructions, think that he stands still, when he is going; like passengers of a ship under sail, think the land moving, and they are standing still. He cannot come short of ability. There is a sweet harmony of God's unchangeableness, in his willing and doing; there is an incapacity of compulsion causing him to act. There are some expressions held forth, as that, Gen vi. 6. 'It repented the Lord that he had made man:' so in 1 Sam. xv. 35. 'And the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.' That doth not contradict this, being spoken after the manner of man: as likewise these expressions held out in his breach of promise, Numb. xiv. 34. Ye shall know my breach of promise. But these promises are only conditional, not absolute; they rather speak of the difference of the several ways he works; but they do not hold forth any changeableness in him, nor of his eternal purposes. We are persuaded, these are either the gladdest news, or the

saddest that ever were proclaimed in your ears, That God is unchangeable: these are like good news from a far country, or as cold waters to a thirsty soul.' If it were possible, that one of those, who are reserved to the day of the Lord's justice in these everlasting chains, were to give their verdict of this attribute of the unchangeableness of God, no doubt, they might conduce much to move us to set to our seal thereto, he being unchangeable in the exercise of his justice towards them. If their captivity were to endure as long as there are pickles of sand by the sea-shore, they would be some way therein comforted; but it is their eternal misery, that there is no hope to be freed from that everlasting darkness, but when they have spent many millions of years in that pit of darkness, they may say, and cry out, This is but the beginning of our sorrows. Now, if that were believed, that God is unchangeable, we would be making more progression, flying from the wrath to come. It is uncertain to many of you, how soon you may come to a close of your time, and be made to hearken to that everlasting sentence, then ye would take this warning; God is commanding you that question. The gates of the New Jerusalem are standing open, that ye would flee thereunto, lest the avenger of blood overtake you; " and who can stand before him, if once he be angry, who makes the mountains to melt at his presence, and who, at the voice of his word, makes all the pillars of the earth to tremble? We are like to those that sleep upon the top of a mast, we are not afraid of that wrath, that shall seize on all them that obey not the gospel. ' And those that are begotten unto a lively hope, through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Are not these good news unto them, that ere it be long, they shall pass into an unchangeableness of life, that these who are taken up now before the throne, are in the enjoyment of him, which they longed so much after? Eternity does not produce the losing of their enjoyment. That is the diamond that shines most brightly in their crown, that he is unchangeable. When shall the one and twenty years of our age come, and that our minority shall pass, and that we may be capacitated to enter into the actual possession of those things that our blessed Lord Jesus is now taking possession of in our name? This is matter of consolation, that though the forty years we are to spend in this wilderness, should be spent in heaviness, yet that we may rejoice in the hope that is set before us, that we shall no more hang our harps on the willow-trees for being in a strange land. O what a glorious appearance shall that be, when all these that are given to our blessed Lord from all eternity, shall be brought to him with raiment of needle-work! Where then the blessed difference betwixt him and us shall clearly appear; surely it is held forth in that word, Rev. xiv.

12. 'His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns.' Many crowns shall be on his head, and only one crown shall be on our head.

Now, we shall point a little at these advantages that a Christian may have in this consideration, that God is unchangeable. There is none almost of all the attributes of God, that conduces so much for a Christian's satisfaction, and for establishing that full assurance of hope, as this of unchangeableness does.

The *first* advantage that we have by the consideration of God's unchangeableness, is this, it is an excellent way to keep the grace of love growing in the Christian: for when a Christian attains to the divine impression of this, that God loveth him, and that his love is unchangeable, then the grace of love in the Christian is made to grow stronger. But as long as we conceive there is a possibility or probability for him to change, love cannot be strong. Then the Christian attains to that pitch thereof, which many waters cannot quench. We cannot attain unto that pitch of love, until once we get this believed, that God is unchangeable. We confess, that a Christian, after he hath attained unto the solid persuasion of this, that his beloved is his, and he is his; yet it is much to persuade them, that that which they have once attained shall never be lost. We confess, these many debates and questions, after we have beheld the salvation of the Lord, and after we have passed from death to life, makes us pass from the first commandment, 'To love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, strength, and mind, &c.' Then doth it produce much misbelief, the debating of God's unchangeableness. Neither would we have you to take advantage by this of more liberty to yourselves, 'Be not high-minded, but fear; thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.' Paul giveth this direction for proving their election and assurance of their interest in Christ, the study and blessed pursuit of holiness. 2 Tim. ii. 19. 'Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.' And then we have this word added, 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' The not knowing what shall be the end of our walking, makes us many days to walk under a cloud.

The *second* advantage that we have by the consideration of God's unchangeableness, is this, it is an immutable and irresistible way to keep life in the exercise of faith. And we have these four things observable in it. *First*, As in the exercise of faith, when he doth exercise us with some strange and extraordinary dispensation, in a manner calling all our terrors about us, as in a solemn assembly, and that he doth wound us with the wounds of an enemy; then we with Gideon cry out, 'If the Lord were

with us, how could all this evil befal us?' There is much consistency in these two, his love and his dispensations. If we were much in the faith of his unchangeableness, we might see much of his love in such a stroke. And having the faith of his doing all things well, we might see it much for our advantage, even the difficultest of dispensations. We confess, this is a difficulty for these that call in question their interest in him. Another thing herein observable is, when God, in his unsearchable wisdom, doth wrap up himself so, that we are not admitted to have access to him, but are constrained to walk without the sight of the king in his beauty. There are many here, no doubt, might say with Esther, Esther iv. 11. 'It is thirty days since we did behold the king:' yea many of us might cry out with Absalom, 2 Sam. xiv. 28. 'I have been these two years in Jerusalem, and have not beheld the king's face.' This makes us call in question our interest; whereas the faith of his unchangeableness would remove much of this, that though he seem to frown, yet he is unchangeable: and though he seem to withdraw, yet he still beholdeth us. The *third* thing is, the faith of his unchangeableness would make us say, 'My beloved shall yet return, I will yet rejoice in the hope of the God of my salvation:' he shall yet come over the mountain as a young hind: he will be for a door of hope to us, notwithstanding of our distance from him: and our faith is strengthened in his unchangeableness, when we have been going abroad after so many lovers, and forsaken him who was the guide of our youth, and making a diligent enquiry after our idols, making us oft to call in question our hope and interest, and to say, that there is such a woful inconsistency between our walk and hope, that it makes us call in question our reality. This is strange, a doubt, that we are made to call in question our interest! whereas the faith of his unchangeableness would be advantageous to us, that notwithstanding of all our offences, he is still unchangeable. O for the faith to believe that God cannot, nor will not change his immutable purposes! It is contrary to human reason that he should be angry, so as not to change his love: but surely we may say, this is not after the manner of man: though we confess many such things as those have been with him. The *fourth* thing in the exercise of faith, which is strengthened in his unchangeableness is, the entertaining of the motions of his Spirit, and should make us come over all these debates and reasonings whereby we quench his Spirit, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption, and do all that lies in us to break ourselves: these many woful interruptions whereby we have resisted his Spirit, have so weakened our hope, that it makes us often to draw that conclusion, so to say, 'That there

is no more sacrifice for sin.' And if our misbelief ascend not to so high a pitch, yet we sit down as those that have no hope; because that after we tasted of the powers of heaven, 'and have crucified Christ afresh, and put him to open shame;' therefore there is a new entry for having access to him. I confess, a Christian having his faith thus brangled, should not only be under the apprehensions of the unchangeableness of God's love, but likewise of the freeness of his love; and therefore we should take us to this, if we can say no more, 'To study to give glory to God, and so hope against hope, and if we perish, let our ruin be under his hand.

The *third* advantage that we have by the consideration of God's unchangeableness, is this, the attaining to much divine patience, and submission under all the sad dispensations, even though in opposition to all that may befal us here. The unchangeableness of God may make us weep under these things, as though we wept not. What though all things should contradict us, and though our acquaintances and friends should flee away from us, and not behold us. O what divine solacing is there in this, 'That God is unchangeable.' Psalm xl. 17. 'I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me.' One thought of God toward us, shewing forth himself, 'that he is unchangeable,' may richly make up all our advantages that are waiting us while we are here below. If the most excellent choices, we have hereaway, should be taken from us; yet this is our advantage, that he cannot be taken away; for he is without the reach of being spoiled by the creature. This may make us to be in a holy neutrality and indifferency of all other things, getting once this one thing at a point, that we may subscribe a blank, and put it in his hands, and let him fill it up as he will for those other things, only seek to be at a point of your being owned of him.

The *fourth* advantage that we have by the consideration of God's unchangeableness, is, we come to the distinct persuasion of the incoming of our elder sister the Jews, Rom. xi. 29. 'The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.' Though your bones should be scattered as about the grave's mouth, yet there is hope of their reviving; folks cannot attain to any persuasion of themselves without the faith of his unchangeableness, that that which they attain unto be committed to him, knowing in whom they have believed.

The *fifth* advantage that we have by the consideration of God's unchangeableness, is, the mortification of all these things here below. If we were much in beholding his unchangeableness, when we behold things here as transient, and he alone permanent, O how might we be necessitated to be crucified to the world, and

to be pressing on towards him! What a pitch of mortification to the world have some win to by the faith of this, 'that he is unchangeable?' All these vanishing things are made quickly to flee away. David saith, in Psalm xxxix. 6. 'Men walketh in a vain show, they are disquieted in vain.' That which makes him attain to such a length, is the divine apprehension of the unchangeableness of God, in the seventh verse of that Psalm, 'And now Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee: there he solaces himself in God, after he had taken a look of the vanity of all things beside him.

The *sixth* advantage that we have by the consideration of God's unchangeableness, is this, much joy and satisfaction: as is clear, Heb. vi. 18. where the immutability of the counsel of God is brought in, to make the heirs of God to have strong consolation. We are exceeding short of our task, when we are out of the exercise of this attribute of God. O but believers might be without the reach of these things that trouble them, by the meditation of his unchangeableness! When we might be going up to the top of mount Pisgah, and beholding the promised land, and to get our hope and satisfaction of these things more in fruition; no doubt, our misbelief of this makes us walk much in heaviness. The most part of Christians' time is spent in seeking the proof of their interest: I do not condemn their work; but it were a compendious way to study himself, whether for shunning of sin and offences, or walking near unto him. This is a part of conformity to God, to be exercising holiness; and for restraining of sins, to be in the consideration of his justice and omnipotency. We confess this is a depth, but it is such a depth as a Lamb may wade. Here is matter for search and admiration.

Now, to this unchangeable God be everlasting praise, world without end. Amen.

SERMON X.

2 Cor. xii. 7. *Lest I should be exalted above measure*, &c.

WERE it not a pleasant and glorious sight to behold one in the form and likeness of the Son of God walking in the midst of his solemn assemblies? Were it not a pleasant sight to behold the stately and majestic steps of princely Jesus in his sanctuary? But, O! it is a sad dispensation, to preach of an unknown Christ, and to hear of an unknown Christ? And is it not a sad dispensation, when at a communion we feast with a vailed Christ that does not hearken to the voice of our cry? Is it not a sad dispensation to walk with an absent Christ? And is it not much more sad for Christians, to take up Christ as at a distance from

them? I think, if the Christians of these days would take a sight of their own hearts, they would see these four things engraven upon them in great letters.

First, They may see much distance from God, and want of an ancient fellowship and abundance of revelation that the saints have had before.

Secondly, A Christian may see little desire engraven on his heart, after the abundance of these revelations, and choice enjoyments that have been communicated to the saints.

Thirdly, A Christian may see little sorrow, notwithstanding of the want of these enjoyments that have been of old communicated to the saints.

Lastly, We may see this engraven on our hearts, our being much affected with the things of a present world, when Christ is away. Are there not idols in our bosom that take up his room? And may not that be a lamentation on the mountains, and high places of Israel? 'O return, return, thou whom our souls love.'

At the last occasion that we spake on these words, we told you there were six things in them.

First, That there are some times when Christ communicates to the souls of his own, eminent, excellent and extraordinary enjoyments of himself; as is clearly presupposed in that word, 'Lest I should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations,' &c. Of this we have spoken to on several occasions.

The *second* thing in the words, of which we are now to speak, is, that the most choice and excellent estate of communion and fellowship with God, that the saints have had below, they are ready to abuse them, and in hazard to spoil them. This is clear, Paul was ready to be 'exalted above measure.' Pride, as it were, was beginning to spring off this noble and excellent root, enjoyment of God. I shall not stand to clear this to you: is it not clear from the practice of Adam, that though he was under most eminent discoveries of God, yet how much did he abuse them in that estate and condition? And is it not clear in Jacob? Gen. xxxii. 29. He fell into the sin of curiosity, when he was under eminent enjoyments of God. Was it not clear in the practice of the bride? Song iii. 3, 4. She fell into the sin of security, when she was under eminent enjoyments of Christ. Was it not clear in the practice of John? Rev. xxii. 8. He fell into the sin of idolatry under eminent enjoyments of Christ. All which do speak this, that a Christian may abuse his most near and excellent enjoyments that he meets with here. And I would only say this by the way, that the desperate evil of pride is one of these things that doreadily steal a Christian's enjoyments. And, by the way, we would have you to notice this, there are some

things in a Christian that he is most ordinarily proud of: *First*, A Christian may be proud of his gifts. *Secondly*, A Christian may be proud of his graces. *Thirdly*, A Christian may be proud of his enjoyments. *Fourthly*, AChristian may be proud of his obedience.

First, He is proud of his gifts, when he has more of the knowledge of Christ than others; he sits down and boasts, and begins to be presumptuous of his borrowed feathers. I would only say this to a Christian that is proud of his gifts, beware lest God take that from thee which thou seemest to have. And I would say this to a Christian that is proud of his gifts, which Joab said to David, 'Let the Lord increase thy gifts, how many soever they be, a thousand fold.' Yet there is no reason to be proud of them.

Secondly, A Christian may be proud of his grace; and that which is more strange, a Christian may be proud of his humility; even that excellent grace, he may have the foundation of pride, that he is humble. Therefore it is much for a Christian to be mortified to his mortification; it is much for a Christian to be denied to his self-denial; to be humble, in his being humble; to be nothing, in his being nothing. I would only say this to a Christian that is proud of his grace, it is impossible for grace to grow, as long as thou art proud; and it is impossible for the grace of others to grow beside thee, as long as thou art proud. I may say that to thee, which the young man said to the prophet, 'Alas, alas! Master, it is borrowed,' your grace is but the gift of Christ.

Thirdly, A Christian may be proud of his enjoyments; as Paul was in hazard 'to be exalted above measure, through the abundance of the revelations,' &c. A Christian does oftentimes ascend in his thoughts, when Christ lifts him up. O! but it is much to sit near the ground, when Christ sets us up above.

Fourthly, A Christian may be proud of his obedience, when he goes about the exercise of any duty that is singular, when he has offered to suffer for Christ, to do some eminent service for Christ, he is then proud.

Now in speaking to this truth, that the most eminent enjoyments of a Christian may be abused, I would speak to these things?

First, To some considerations concerning this. And,

First, Consider the devil never assaults a Christian more violently, than immediately after his enjoyments; 'The blast of the terrible one is then as a storm against the wall,' when a Christian is under eminent enjoyments. We suppose this is clear from these words, when Paul was brought nearest Christ, 'then Satan was at his right hand, ready to oppose him.' There is,

A *second* consideration, and it is this, that oftentimes the devil never gets such eminent victories over Christians, as after their enjoyments; I mean of some Christians, after their emi-

nent enjoyments: we suppose this is clear in the experience of the saints. I shall only give you these three grounds, why the devil's most eminent victories are immediately after enjoyments.

First, A Christian is then most imprudent and presumptuous; oftentimes therefore it is, that the not walking within the blessed lines of dependence, and divine subordination to Christ, the devil gets advantage over him. Sometimes a Christian, after his enjoyments, walketh in his own strength, or, at the best, in the strength of his enjoyments.

A *second* ground why the devil's most eminent victories are immediately after enjoyments, is this, because when a Christian is not much in the exercise of watchfulness. Oftentimes when a Christian is admitted to the banqueting-house of Christ, and his banner of love is over him, then he falls asleep in the bed of love; then it is that a Christian says to his soul, 'take thee rest, for thou hast much goods laid up for many years.'

A *third* ground why the devil's most eminent victories are immediately after enjoyments, is this, then ordinarily a Christian loses the grace of fear. After we are begun to be brought near the king, we should beware of singing the triumph before the victory. When we are brought within sight of Christ, then we cry out, 'My mountain standeth strong, I shall never be moved.' Therefore I would say this to you, watch, watch, watch, after enjoyments, 'for he is at hand that is ready to betray you.'

The *third* consideration is, consider the temptations of the devil, and these assaults that he trists immediately after enjoyments, that they be resisted and withstood. There are eminent advantages attending such a frame, if there be a messenger of Satan given to buffet you after enjoyments, then resist. I may say, there is more advantage to resist a temptation after enjoyments, than there is by resisting three after desertion. It is then that a Christian kills his ten thousands; but at other times he kills but his thousands. I shall give you this advantage that a Christian gets by resisting temptations after enjoyments. *First*, It brings forth much humility. It is known it has a broad sight of these two. 1. A broad sight of Christ. And, 2. a broad sight of ourselves; it will make us to lie low in the dust: as is clear in the practice of Paul; in the former verses, he doth vent much of his enjoyments; but giving way to the devil's assaults, then it is their stirring up or awaking Christ ere he please. I suppose, these enjoyments of Christ that are attended with much spiritual fightings, are the longest, the sweetest, and the most advantageous. The *third* advantage is this, such a Christian doth maintain the faith of these two. 1. Of his interest in Christ. 2. And of the reality of his enjoyments. Believe it, it is hard for a

Christian to give way to the temptation immediately after enjoyments, and not be constrained to call in question their interest, or, at least, the reality of their enjoyments, if ye would keep the faith of these two lively upon your spirits, study to resist the devil, when he buffets you at such a time. The *fourth* advantage that attends a Christian immediately after enjoyments by resisting temptations, is this, it puts a Christian much to the exercise of prayer. This is clear in comparing the words of the text with the following verse; 'for this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.' And is not this a noble advantage, to have a divine liberty in going about that noble and excellent duty, prayer? And, by the way, the prayers that a Christian hath, to resist temptations immediately after enjoyments, they receive a speedy return; so Paul received speedily that return, 2 Cor. ix. 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' The *fifth* advantage is this, it is a notable way for a Christian to come to the right improving of his enjoyments. It stands in, 1. The strengthening our experiences. As it were, there should not be an enjoyment of God, nor visit of Christ, but it should be put in among the records of our experiences. 2. Our enjoyments should strengthen our experiences. As it were, there should not be a sight gotten but we should take Christ in our arms, and cry out, 'He is mine, he is mine.' 3. Our enjoyments should be improven for the strengthening of our love. There is not a sight of Christ, but it should strengthen that noble grace of love; that when we see Christ, we may be constrained to love, and to cry out, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us?' 4. Our enjoyments should be improven for strengthening in duty, and our hatred of sin. These are the excellent improvements of enjoyments. And, I say, if a Christian would win to this, he should study to resist temptations on the back of enjoyments.

The *fourth* consideration is, that the most eminent victories that a Christian meets with, is at a time when he resists temptations immediately after enjoyments. *First*, Because then a Christian hath much strength. I shall only give you these three grounds why the most eminent victories of a Christian are by resisting of temptations after enjoyments. *First*, Because then a Christian hath much strength communicated unto him for wrestling with temptation: as it were, there is not an enjoyment of a Christian, but it hath strength to the full to fight with the special enemies. A *second* ground is, because the captain of the field is present, he is standing at our right hand. These do exceedingly help to have eminent victories over the devil. A *third* ground is, a Christian, in the time of his enjoyments, has low and undervaluing account and esteem of all things beside Christ. Sometimes there

are, wherein a Christian cannot strike at his idols with force; there is, as it were, a piece of his heart that withdraws his strength, and it is certain, that sometimes a piece of the heart of a Christian will cry out, mortify such a lust; and another piece of the heart will cry out, O mortify not such a lust. *Secondly*, We would propose these seven faults that a Christian falls in after his enjoyments.

The *first* fault that a Christian falls in after his enjoyments, is pride; and this is clear from the words of the text, and from Psalm xxx. 6. I would only say this by the way, and take notice of it, it is more easy for a Christian to be denied to his graces, than to be denied to his enjoyments. The graces of a Christian are not so much the foundation of his pride, as his enjoyments. This is clear from Gal. ii. 20. compared with the words of the text, where Paul is denied to his grace, but he is in hazard of being proud of his enjoyments.

The *second* fault that a Christian falls in after his enjoyments is, curiosity to propose questions to God, that he should not propose; so Jacob, when he was in communion with God, fell in this curious question, tell me thy name? And so also Manoah, and he received this answer, 'Why askest thou after my name, seeing it is secret?' Or as the words may be rendered, 'seeing it is wonderful.' I suppose 'too much familiarity of a Christian with God, corrupt good manners:' they then begin to ask a ground of his doing: they then study to take up the incomprehensible essence of God. And I would say this, a Christian sometimes in his enjoyments, falls into the sin of idolatry; it is not so when ye are nearest God, ye study to bring down God in some visible shape or idea, that so that visible shape of God may provoke fear? And this is damnable idolatry, transforming the invisible God into the image of a visible thing.

The *third* fault is, a Christian's slighting of his enjoyments, when he has abundance of the precious revelations, he begins to slight and undervalue these excellent things. I would only say these two things to you; *First*, That a Christian may long much, and pursue earnestly after the enjoyments of God, and yet when he has them, may undervalue them: he may have an high esteem of an absent Christ, and a low esteem of a present Christ, see Song iv. ult. compared with chap. v. 3. In the first place, she longs much after the enjoyment of Christ, and communion with him; and yet when it is attained, she does much slight it. *Secondly*, A Christian may long much after communion with God at one time, and refuse it at another time. This is clear by comparing Song iii. ult. with Song v. 3. there she is much in longing after the breathings of the Spirit: yet in chap. v. 3.

she undervalues his condescending to visit her. I suppose it is known, it is the great fault of a Christian to undervalue communion when he has it.

There is this *fourth* fault, our being more in undervaluing our enjoyments than in having a high account of the Lord that gave the enjoyments; or else this, we are oftentimes more in love with the gift of God, than with him who is the giver; we terminate our love, our faith, upon our joy, our enjoyments, all which should be terminated upon Christ.

The *fifth* fault in a Christian is security; this is clear in Song v. 2. where the bride being under eminent enjoyments of Christ, she fell asleep. It is known, that when Christ does manifest himself, we then put off our coat, and take our rest.

The *sixth* fault that a Christian falls in after his enjoyments, is this, he takes advantage to be more neglectful in duty, because of his enjoyments. Ordinarily a Christian does never more slight watchfulness, nor fear so much as after enjoyments.

The *seventh* fault that a Christian falls in after his enjoyments, is this, a sinful gazing and wondering at our enjoyments. Is it not sometimes known, that a Christian, meeting with eminent enjoyments of God in prayer, he has begun to wonder at what he has attained, and forgotten to pursue after more? they have stood and gazed at what was their present lot and dispensation, but they pursued not after more. I say this, let not a Christian reflect on his enjoyments, till he has done with prayer. For ordinarily a Christian, when he has wondered at his enjoyments, he has brought himself into a dead and lifeless frame.

Now that, *thirdly*, which we would speak unto, is this, that since communion with God, and eminent enjoyments that a Christian has of Christ, may be abused, I would only press these three things to be a Christian's exercise after enjoyments. *First*, O Christians! be much in the exercise of fear: 'let him that stands, take heed lest he fall.' Would ye know when a Christian is nearest a fall, or apostacy? It is when he is farthest from apostacy in his own apprehension. I love not a fearless Christian that shall bear his own weight. *Secondly*, Be as much in studying how to keep Christ when present, as ye have endeavoured to get Christ when absent: therefore, when ye have gotten the presence of Christ, think not your work is done. The greatest work is before your hands, which is this, 'To charge your hearts by the roes and hinds of the field, that they stir not up nor awake your beloved, till he please.' O but it is much to be touched with Christ's presence! Believe it, Christ can dispense with wrongs while absent, that he will not dispense with while present. *Thirdly*, Study to improve your enjoyments to the end for which they

were sent. There is not a visit of Christ, but it has a voice. There are two great voices and words that our enjoyments do speak. *First*, O mortify your predominant idols! *Secondly*, O love precious Christ! In a manner, when a Christian sees Christ, he never desires the seeing of another object. I would ask this question at you. Did ye never meet with a visit from Christ in such a place, that ye did call it, the place of living after seeing? I think, if the life of communion with God were known, we would not be so great strangers to it.

The *third* thing that we proposed to speak to from the words, was this, that the most dark and dreadful dispensation that we meet with, has a glorious end in it. This is clear from the end of giving 'a messenger of Satan to buffet Paul, lest he should be exalted above measure.' The darkest cross and affliction of a Christian has a sweet design of love treasured up in it.

In speaking to this, I would speak a little to these things.

First, There are five dark dispensations, at least terrible like dispensations of Christ to the soul, every one of them shall have a glorious end, and a sweet design of love.

The *first* dark dispensation that a Christian meets with is this, God's permitting the devil, or 'a messenger from Satan to buffet him.' It is sad for a Christian to be under the strong assaults of the devil. Sometimes a Christian is put to that question under his manifold temptations, 'O why am I thus?' Yet his dispensation has a sweet design of love, for the power of love and grace is manifested here.

The *second* dark dispensation that a Christian meets with, is this, to be under desertion and distance when he goes to prayer. Christ draws a vail betwixt his face and them: and when they come to preachings, Christ, as it were, standing behind the curtains, doth not manifest himself: and when they go to communions, they sit down and feast with a vailed Christ; they sit down with one that does not manifest himself to them. Yet, O say I, in this dark dispensation of desertion, where is that design of love? All things work together for the good of them that love precious Christ. I confess a deserted Christian, when desertion and distance is a burden, it is a comfortless life: but believe it, the visits of Christ, after long desertion, is a most refreshful visit, it hath much advantage in it.

The *third* dark dispensation that a Christian meets with, is this, his being put to dispute his interets, and being under a cloud in regard of his hope, he is put to debate, have I a right to heaven? O that this debate were the lot of many, and many were serious in that question: however, there be not a dispute concerning your interest to heaven, nor a questioning of your peace with God.

The *fourth* dark dispensation that Christians meet with, is this, when they are denied the returns of their prayers: they say, it is much to pray to an absent Christ, but it is much more to pray to a silent Christ, that doth not hearken to the voice of our cry. I would only say this of the returns of your prayers, he has a sweet design of love in them. He knows well how to dispense of his abundance, and how to time his gifts.

The *fifth* and last dark dispensation that Christians meet with, is this, that for all the pains that they have taken in mortifying their lusts, they come not speed. This is sad, and an afflicting dispensation, that notwithstanding all the pains they took to mortify their idols, they are as strong on their hands as before. I would only say this to such fight, for the day of your victory is coming. A Christian must die fighting, and not triumphing. I think it is not unsuitable to a Christian's hope, that when he shall be standing before the gates of heaven, to be fighting with his corruptions; it is unsuitable to his hope, that when the one foot is within the gates of the city, and the other without, to have a tear falling from our eyes, as it were, for a Christian to give up the ghost with this, 'O wretched man that I am!'

That which, *secondly*, I shall speak to, shall be to some considerations concerping this.

1. It is more easy for a Christian to behold infinite wisdom in their stroke, than infinite love in the darkest dispensations that Christ dispenses to his own. They may behold infinite wisdom in it, when they cannot behold infinite love in it. I would only say this by the way, a Christian should study these three things in his darkest dispensations. 1*st*, Infinite wisdom in his crosses, to see that God dispenses so with him, and hath dealt wisely in so doing. 2*dly*, A Christian should study spotless holiness and righteousness in his dispensations: he may see that God in afflicting is just: as it were, when Christ presents a cross to us, we may write down this to the foot of our crosses, 'Righteous art thou, O Lord, when thou judgest,' &c. 3*dly*, A Christian should study to see infinite love in his cross.

2. I would say this to you, that a Christian when he meets with a cross, he may take it in his arms with patience; yet, if the same cross be lengthened out, he may turn impatient; this is clear in the practice of Job.

3. I would say this to you, there may be much disputings of God's way of conveying you to heaven; there may be much fretting and repining at your cross dispensations; but believe it, the day is approaching, when ye shall write this upon the posts of the door of heaven, 'He hath done all things well.' I think, there shall be some part of eternity spent in interrogations and

questions: Christ will question you concerning the things ye met with; O friend! when I sent such a cross, did I not well? And ye shall be constrained to answer, yes. And, O friend, when I deserted you at such a time, did I not well? Then ye shall answer, yes, O precious Christ! thou hast done all things well.

4. I would say this to you, it is impossible for a Christian to have the same thoughts of his crosses now when he is under them, that he shall have at the day of death: then a Christian shall be constrained to cry out, and say, Blessed be the Lord that ever I met with such a cross. I shall only desire you to get your peace made with God, that all things ye meet with may be blessed unto you, knowing this of a surety, there is not one grain weight of affliction in the cup, O Christian! that infinite wisdom did not contrive to be there, and infinite love did not put there, and so is it not a cup that must be drunken, since the precious fingers of Christ have mingled it? Therefore let not thy heart say when thou meets with a cross, 'O let this cup pass from me!' There is more love in a cross, than oftentimes we do imagine; where are the sweet actings of love? Where are the sweet soul embracings betwixt Christ and the soul 'when they are admitted to behold the sun in his strength, and to behold him whose cheeks are as beds of spices, set about with flowers?' A Christian's midnight without, may be his noon-day within; there may be a sweet day within, when there is not much light without. O that we were content to go to heaven in a fiery chariot, that there may not be a dispensation that Christ carves out to us, but we may take it in our arms and welcome it. O prisoners of hope, and expectants of heaven, and heirs of the grace of life! comfort yourselves with this, that ere long the song shall be heard in heaven, speaking comfortably to Jerusalem and to her mourners. Behold, O Christians! Christ is standing at the end of your race with a crown in his hand, crying out, 'to him that overcometh will I give the crown of life.' O what a day shall it be, when the blessed hand of Jesus Christ shall put a crown upon our heads? and will we not be constrained to take off the crown which he hath put on, and cast it at his feet, according to that practice, Rev. iv. at the close? As it were, they thought shame to wear a crown in his sight, as is imported in these words, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power,' &c.' Will ye think on this precious day, when our darkness and night shall be turned to the morning, that shall admit of no following night. I might say, O what wonderful actings of love? What wonderful actings of joy? What wonderful actings of knowledge will be in that day? I would only press this upon you, will ye but take this before your hearts, and, as it were, think upon it, and act their

blessedness that are in heaven? What would you think to have Christ eternally in your arms? Would you have a description of heaven? It is Christ sitting in the midst, and all the eyes of these many precious thousands are fixed on him, and his eyes fixed on them. In short, it stands in these four.

First, Christ is looking to the saints, and their eyes are looking on him.

Secondly, The saints are eternally loving Christ, and Christ is eternally loving them.

Thirdly, They are eternally wondering at him, and he is eternally wondering at them; he is to be admired of all his saints, and glorified of all them that believe.

Fourthly, The saints are embracing Christ, and he is embracing them. O these soul-ravishing embraces of Christ in the arms of them that are begotten again unto a lively hope, there is no separation between Christ and them! I would wish that the desire of the Greeks, John xii. 21. were the desire of all that are here. 'We desire to see Jesus.' O if you had but one desire? to behold and get a sight of him, ye would get him for a desire? Shall ever these cursed eyes 'behold the Sun of righteousness, the noble Plant of renown?' O blessed are these that see him? Blessed are these that have their hope and expectation of seeing him? O blessed are these that are walking in their way? I shall say no more but this, a Christian, while he is here, he is both out of Christ, and in Christ, and going to Christ.

He is in Christ, in respect of faith; out of Christ, in respect of that endless complete conformity; and going to Christ, in respect of that endless immediate fruition of him; he is going to Christ, to have his eternal delights that are at his right-hand? O run, run, run, till the day that you shall have Christ unfolded to you, by his being in your arms, and shall be contained to cry out, 'Here I will rest, and make my eternal abode.'

Now, to this Christ be eternal praise. Amen.

SERMON XI *.

2 Cor. iv. 3. *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.*

THIS everlasting gospel that is preached unto you, 'is sent for the falling and rising again of many in Israel;' for as the gospel is to some that precious *foundation stone*, so likewise it is to others 'that stumbling-stone, and rock of offence upon whom it falls.' I may say to some that are here, I have the saddest news to tell you that ever ye heard, and that is, 'Jesus Christ

* This Sermon was preached at the Eastwood.

is come into the world;' and the reason of this is, because tho' he be preached and holden out to you, 'yet ye do not accept nor embrace him as he is offered.' There is not one among a thousand that speaks this unto themselves, 'My soul hath said unto the Lord, thou art my portion, therefore will I hope in thee.'

The apostle here is vindicating his ministry, and to this purpose he brings in three notable grounds in the two former verses, for the vindication of it.

The *first* ground is this, that he was a man that did not run unsent; as in the twelfth verse. 'Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not;' as if he would say, 'This unspeakable gift of the Lord has been given me, to put me upon this ministry, therefore this is the ground why I gave not over, for all the discouragements I meet with.'

The *second* ground is this, that he had rejected all things for this ministry.

The *third* ground is set down in the second verse. That he had preached convincingly and plainly, even to the conviction of their own consciences, so as they could not but acknowledge he was sent of God. Now he comes in this verse to make an objection, as if the Corinthians had said, 'What needs all this Paul, if thou be such a man as thou sayest, show us the success of thy ministry:' and he answers that most sweetly in the third verse. Wherein ye may take notice of these three great reasons why this gospel was not effectual to these Corinthians.

The *first* great reason why this gospel was not effectual to these Corinthians is this, that there was a standing decree above their heads, that they were eternal heirs of wrath.

The *second* great reason why this gospel was not effectual to these Corinthians, is this, that great fellowship and correspondence that their hearts kept with the devil in the fourth verse. We suppose there is much implied in that word *in whom;* pointing out that Satan had a constant and most uninterrupted communion with them.

The *third* and last great reason why this gospel was not effectual to these Corinthians, is this, that Satan had cast a vail over their eyes, so that the knowledge and excellency of this gospel should not be embraced by them. But from this we shall observe these three doctrines.

The *first* doctrine in the words is this, that the gospel is hid and unknown, and availeth nothing to many that hear it. There are many, before whose eyes Christ is crucified, that will never get another sight of him but one, and that is, when they shall see him sitting on his throne, and rendering judgment upon them that have not obeyed the gospel.

The *second* doctrine in the words is this, that be the persons who will, to whom this gospel is preached, and is hid, and unknown, it is a certain forerunner of some sad destruction from the Lord; 'if it be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;' importing unsupportable and unspeakable ruin.

The *third* doctrine from the scope of the words is this, there may be much lively and sweet convincing truths holden out by the gospel, and yet not be for the profit of the hearers. This is clear by comparing the second verse with the third verse. And that is not the fault of the gospel, nor oftentimes of the preacher, so much as it is the fault of the hearers, that the gospel is hid and unknown.

But to come to the *first* doctrine in the words, which was this, that the gospel is hid and unknown, and availeth nothing to many that hear it; this is clear, Mark xi. 25. 'At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes.' O think ye that Christ is thanking the Father that the gospel shall never do this place good? Isa. liii. 8. 'Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?'

Now we shall propose these eight respects wherein the gospel is hid to many that hear it. And,

First, It it hid and vailed to many in respect of the truths of it: there are many that hear this gospel that do not believe what is spoken by it, 1 Cor. i. 18. And in John v. 10. 'He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar.' There is not a sermon that ever thou heard and slighted, but thou says, 'O Son of God, thou lies: and O Father, thou lies:' and is not that a dreadful iniquity?

The *second* respect wherein the gospel is hid to many that hear it, is this, in respect of the beauty, sweetness, and excellency of it. There are many, that though they hear the sound of the words, yet as for the excellency and sweetness of it, they never see it. O sinners and strangers to Christ? saw ye never the beauty that is in this gospel? Was not the pearl of great price ever so much discerned by you, that ye were forced to take on resolutions to sell all ye have, and buy it.

The *third* respect wherein the gospel is hid to many that hear it, is this, peoples want of convictions of the necessity of this gospel, there are many, that this is the great work of the devil with them, never to let this enter into their bosom. That Christ and they are strangers together. This is the doctrine that Satan preaches within them, 'peace, peace, when sudden destruction cometh.' These are they that Christ spoke to, 'The whole need not a physician.'

The *fourth* respect wherein the gospel is hid to many that

hear it, is this, in peoples want of convictions of the disadvantages that wait upon these that slight this everlasting gospel. Are there not many that think that the slighting of Christ and the gospel shall never be laid to their charge? Such are these spoken of in Deut. xxix. 20.

The *fifth* respect wherein the gospel is hid to many that hear it, is this, in the want of the actual application of it. How often has Christ stood up in the congregation, and said, 'O sinners! will ye not take me?' And might he not have gone away with that complaint, 'A whole day have I stood up here in Eastwood, and none would so much as give me a look?' Is there none saying, since the refusing of him has been my practice, I will take him now?

The *sixth* respect wherein the gospel is hid to many that hear it, is this, in the want of the distinct uptaking of the sinfulness of slighting the gospel. This is that scarlet transgression that has a speaking voice in heaven. I would only convince you of this mistake, and that is, when ye see any infirmity in any believing Christian, ye will wonder; but though ye see an unbelieving sinner, ye will not wonder.

The *seventh* respect wherein the gospel is hid to many that hear it, is this, the want of the experimental knowledge of the sweetness of this gospel, Luke xiv. 18. and downward.

The *eighth* and *last* respect wherein the gospel is hid to many that hear it, is this, in peoples want of the solid faith of these unspeakable advantages that wait on these that embrace this gospel, and take hold of the Son of God. O come and see whether Christ be worthy of that report that is made of him or not! And if ye find him not to be above these six reports, then I may say to you, ye shall have your liberty to go your way.

1. He is far above thy faith, stretch it to the utmost in believing all that has been said of him.

2. He is above thy desire.

3. He is above thy necessities, justification and salvation, reckon them as long as you will; come to him and thou shalt have more than thou can tell.

4. He is much above all that ye have heard tell of him.

5. He is above all the thoughts that ever ye have had of him. Thought ye him to be 'white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand? He is that bright and morning star, he is the root of Jesse, and the offspring of David.'

Lastly, Ye shall find him far above all that ever spoke of him. What have ye found of him that is the substance of this gospel? Come to him, and thou shalt find him much above all thy expressions. O Christians! did ye never see such a sight of Christ,

as made you cry out, for a hundred hearts to give him? And saw you never so much of him, as made you cry out, 'It is good to be here, and to make three tabernacles.'

But in the further prosecution of this truth, I shall speak to ten things that make this sin scarlet coloured and dreadful.

It is a sin against the greatest wisdom of God, and against the lowest step of his humiliation; and it is against his grace and design: and also, it is against his name that he desires to magnify above all his work. What was the most excellent act of his wisdom? Was it not the inventing of this gospel, 'and reconciling sinners to himself?' What was the lowest step of his humiliation? Was it not his coming into the world? And what was his name that he desires to magnify above all his works? Is it not his mercy? And what is that great desire of heaven today? Is it not this, O sinners! be reconciled to my Son? It is both the first and the last desire, that ye be reconciled to Christ. Now, put all these together, O what a sin it is to slight the Lord Jesus Christ.

The *second* aggravation of this sin, is this, it is a sin against that blessed consent and divine harmony that is between all the Persons of the blessed Trinity, to invite you to come in. O strangers to Christ! 1. The Father, the first Person of the blessed Trinity, bids you come away and take his Son, 1 John iii. 23. 'This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.' 2. The Son, the second Person of the blessed Trinity, testifies his own consent, as it is in Matth. xi. 28. 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden.' 3. The Holy Ghost, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, gives his consent to the bargain. Rev. xxii. 17. 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come.' Shall the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, cry, O sinners! will ye come? And will ye yet stay? May I not ask this question at you, that the Lord asked Elisha, 'O sinners, why stand ye here? Why do ye not flee from him that is the avenger of blood, who will come upon you ere it be long?

The *third* aggravation of this sin, is this all other sins laid in the balance with it, are nothing, John xv. 22. 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin:' as if Christ had said, 'Though sinners had broken the law ten thousand times, yet they had not sinned in respect of this aggravation;' and that is, because it is the sin the Holy Ghost is sent to convince us of, in John xvi. 8, 9. 'And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me.'

The *fourth* ground of this aggravation, is unbelief. It is a

most absurd and groundless sin; there is no pleasure in it. There is no sin that any commit, but they can render a reason for it, but none against this; that it might be fulfilled which is written in the law, 'they hated me without a cause.' O sinners, what ails you at Christ Jesus? I charge you, by all the dreadful disadvantages that shall wait on all these slighters of the gospel, that you would now come and take him: there is that word, Jer. viii. 9. and 2 Thess. ii. 3. 'They have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?'

The *fifth* aggravation, is this, the excellent names that this gospel gets. Must it not be an excellent thing? It is called, 'the wisdom of God,' in 1 Cor. i. 24. And must it not be an excellent thing, that is called, 'the word of reconciliation?' And it is called, 'the field where the pearl of great price is:' as in Matth. xiii. 44. O stand in awe lest the sin of slighting of Christ provoke him to depart from you.

The *sixth* aggravation is this, that Christ is come so low in his terms, and therefore if you slight him, it must be a non-such transgression. O how low is he come. There are none here but they may have him for a hearty desire, and a look. 'Now, why will ye die, O house of Israel?' The market is now at the lowest, therefore sit not your time, but come and buy him.

The *seventh* aggravation is this, 'The gospel is a mystery the angels desire to pry into:' as what is the expression of all these blessed troops that are about the throne, Rev. xi. 17. 'Saying, 'We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come, hallelujah, and praise.' As it were, Christ is indeed the gospel seen and heard in heaven.

The *eighth* aggravation of this sin of unbelief, is from the names it gets in these scriptures.

First, It is called, Heb. x. 29. 'A treading of the Son of God under foot.' Now is there a person here that is not doing so.

The *second* name it gets in scripture is, it is called, 'A despite done to the Spirit of grace.' It is a resisting and proclaiming war against the Son of God.

The *third* name it gets in scripture is, it is called, 'A putting him to open shame,' Heb. vi. 6.

The *fourth* name it gets in scripture is, it is called, 'A casting of God behind your back,' 1 Kings xiv. 9. Ezek. ii. chap. What a scarlet transgression must this be, 'To cast Christ behind your back?'

The *fifth* name it gets in scripture, is in Isa. liii. 2, 3. There are eight expressions there, all tending to one thing. Now seeing it is so, what answer will you make or give to Christ?

The *ninth* aggravation is this, it has a most immediate hand in ruining of many souls in the world. Ye know what and who

they are, that are to be excommunicated from the presence of God, they are mentioned in Rev. xxi. 8. 'The fearful and unbelieving, they shall go first to hell.' O may I not ask you this one question, 'How think ye to escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?'

Tenth and *lastly*, Unbelief is the sin that will bring on many constant and unspeakable ruins. O misbelievers, and slow of heart to take up that which Christ has revealed in scripture, read your doom, in John iii. 18, 36. 'He that believeth not, is condemned already;' he is as sure in hell, and in the devil's arms, as if he were in it already; he is condemned in respect of the sentence of the law. Will ye go to God, and ask, am I the man that is condemned already? The second word in the 36th verse, 'He that believeth not the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him.' It shall not be a pilgrimage, it shall never flit? for when once the mercy of God in his word, hath spoken its last word, then the justice of God comes, and says, 'Here I abide,' I pray you consider, 'lest, ere it be long, repentance be hid from your eyes, and that these things that belong to your peace be shut from your eyes;' I intreat you, if there be any beauty in Christ, and joy to be found in him; I intreat you, by all the promises of the covenant, and by all the threatenings denounced against the slighters of the gospel, to come this night, and tell that you would have Christ. And believe it, Christ is as willing to take you, as ye are to have him. I would have you to consider:

1. That the day is coming, when there is not a man nor a woman that is within these doors, that has heard this gospel, and slighted it, but they shall cry and shriek for the day that ever they were born.

2. Consider, sinners, ye that are old, posting towards eternity, what do ye know but this shall be the last preaching that ever ye shall hear? As the causes of your fasts speak of the great sickness that is amongst you, what wot ye, but ere twelve hours at night, that voice shall cry, 'Awake, traitor, and come to judgment.'

3. Consider Christ is here, though we see him not: and what is he doing? He is even waiting for your answer. Ye are called here to-day to mourn for your former slightings of the gospel: and he desires no more, but that you would come to him. What ails you? For I am persuaded that all the advantages that ever could commend another, they are infinitely in him. What would ye have in a husband? Is it beauty? 'He is fairer than the sons of men.' Is it riches? 'He is Lord of all the earth.' Is it wisdom? 'Is it not in him, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom, yea, in whom the God-head dwells bodily?' O come, and ye may see in him all that is to be desired. But,

Lastly, We shall speak of some impediments, that make the hearers of this gospel fall so little in love with the Son of God.

First, The most part are not convinced of the very truth of this gospel. There are two strange complaints of Christ in John iii. 11. 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we spake that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.'

The *second* impediment that makes the hearers of this gospel fall so little in love with the Son of God is, the most part are not convinced of their need of Christ: therefore, when Christ's disciples had been spoken to on that purpose, why they were so few that did embrace him, he says, 'The whole not a physician.' I may commend need from two things: *First*, It answers all objections. There are many will say, I cannot come to Christ, because I fear I be not welcome; another will say, I would come, but I have not that measure of holiness that I would have; another will say, alas! I would come, but I cannot get up my heart to him. But I may say that of necessity, which Solomon says of money, 'It answers all things.' *Secondly*, Unbelief would have a sinner through many back-gates, but necessity leads people the high way to Christ.

The *third* impediment that makes the hearers of this gospel fall so little in love with the Son of God, is, there is in every heart of men and women, something that hinders them from making use of this gospel of Jesus Christ. The thing that hinders me from coming to Jesus Christ is, they say, I would come, but he will not accept of me. But I dare say, you lie. For Christ knows where to father unbelief as well as ye; and yet he tells you, 'ye will not come unto me that ye may have life.' Never father your unbelief upon the devil, nor temptations, and want of thorough humiliation; father it on this, ye have no will to the bargain.

The *fourth* impediment that makes the hearers of this gospel fall so little in love with the Son of God is, there are many people that do not believe the freedom of the gospel; there are some that would divide the two covenants, they would take a piece of both; but these persons will never come speed.

The *fifth* impediment that makes the hearers of this gospel fall so little in love with the Son of God is, desperate worldly-mindedness. What hinders many? it is a wife, or land, or a house.

The *sixth* impediment that makes the hearers of this gospel fall so little in love with the Son of God is, people are not convinced in their own hearts, that there is no other way, nor no other name whereby they can be saved, but by Christ.

The *seventh* impediment that makes the hearers of this gospel fall so little in love with the Son of God is, there are many that are strangers unto these three things: *First*, They are strangers

unto this, that the curse of God is lying upon them for sin. *Secondly*, There are many that are strangers unto the dreadful consequences that wait upon these. *Thirdly*, They are strangers unto the sweetness and non-such advantages that these that wait upon God get; it is like, that may be said of many, which is said of the Jews, in another case, 'That when Moses is reading, the vail is upon their eyes.' So likewise when Christ and the gospel is preached unto you, ye cannot take up that ravishment, and soul-breaking that is in it. But,

The *eighth* impediment that makes the hearers of this gospel fall so little in love with the Son of God is, there are many that are seeking more after the approbation of men, than after divine approbation, John v. 44. 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only.

The *ninth* and *last* impediment that makes the hearers of the gospel fall so little in love with the Son of God is, that cursed correspondence that is betwixt us and our idols. What shall I say? shall I leave you? But before I end, I would ask some questions at you.

The *first* question I would ask at you is, is there any in heaven that is comparable unto Christ? Is there any that has that transcendent worth that is in him? Now since he has no match, what ails you at him? Does not your light say, O precious Christ! 'Thou art fairer than any of the sons of men?' And yet do not your idols say, I am fairer? And there is some that are saying, O precious Christ! thou art worth ten thousand of my idols, and yet your affections are more knit to your idols than to Christ.

The *second* question I would ask you, is this, is there none here to-day that is convinced, that this gospel in former times has been hid from them, and that the devil has been sitting within the temple of their hearts, and ruling in it.

The *third* question I would ask at you, is this, Do ye believe that eternity is approaching, and that these eye-strings of yours, ere it be long, shall break, and your desire shall fail?

The *fourth* question I would ask at you is this, do ye believe, that, ere long, ye shall pass betwixt the first and second gate of death? If it were believed, we would not live at so great distance from God.

The *fifth* question I would ask at you, is this, do ye believe, that ere it be long, Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and this treaty of peace, that is betwixt Christ and sinners, shall be broken up? Are there not some here, that would ask the question, O has Christ, has Christ spoken his last words to me?

The *sixth* question I would ask at you, is this O slighters of this gospel, and undervaluers of the Son of God! what ex-

cuse will ye make to Christ, when ye shall see him sitting on the clouds, with a white robe, and when he will call every one here by their names? Why do ye slight me? We know your answer will be, Oh! and alas! that I had never been where the gospel was. God grant this be not your case. Amen.

A

WORD OF EXHORTATION

BY

Mr. ANDREW GRAY, before the Communion of Glasgow before the Action.

I SHALL not speak much to you, I would only say this, there are six most speaking evidences, that these days will be dreadful days to Glasgow; and ere long the ministers and people shall be put to propose that prayer to God, "Oh that we had never "had a name!" Give me leave to say it, I think he must needs be said to prophecy, who shall say, the dreadful fruits of these two days shall be seen many days hence.

The *first* sad evidence that these days will be dreadful days, is this, want of tenderness. I suppose, few tears have been shed since Glasgow's communion began. I think, we are as little moved, when we are feasting with Christ, as we were feasting with a stone.

The *second* sad evidence that these days will be dreadful days, is this, there was never less pains taken for such a solemn ordinance, as has been by many of us. What are we doing? I know, if we saw it, many of us are rushing upon the edge of Christ's eternal displeasure.

The *third* sad evidence that these days will be dreadful days, is this, is there any here to-day, to whom Christ's withdrawing from these solemn ordinances, is their burden? May not this be written, "O Glasgow! Glasgow! on all your communion tables, "Christ is gone, Christ is gone?"

The *fourth* sad evidence that these days will be dreadful days, is this, the little longing that we have after Christ, and a crucified Saviour. In a manner, I think, there are some of us that have lost all that desire which we seemed to have. For Christ may seem to come, and go without observation of us all, I would ask this at all of you, is there a desire with you to feast with Christ to-day? I know, if you saw him, ye would not know him: yea, some, I know, knows not if there be a Christ there or not.

The *fifth* sad evidence that these days shall be dreadful days,

is this, that for any thing we may discern or read, we may see little exercise of faith, or love, or repentance, among you. Ye may think it strange, and I desire to be mistaken, that if it were in my own case, I would we were all presently dismissed from going to the table; for we are not in a feasting frame. Are you content to go? I think now, he forbids us to come to the table. O believe me, I think, we shall feast alone the day, and then it shall be a sad feast; is there any here that has seen the Master of the feast?

The *sixth* and *last* sad evidence, which may speak forth a sad and dreadful day to this place, is this, I think, all the communions that ever some of us have been at, and all the ordinances that we have been made partakers of, we had often this to say, Oh! that I had not been at such an ordinance.

I desire that ye may be composed for such a solemn work. Are ye ready? Are ye ready? Are ye ready to come and embrace Jesus Christ? Ay, we think, there is such a noise sounding in our ears, enquire not after me. Do ye not all miss him, the day of whose countenance one look would make this assembly a blessed assembly? And think but a little whether we shall proceed or stay. We desire not to speak so much of the causes of his departure: I think, indeed, there are some of us, that it were better with you that we were away: I think there are some that never were at a communion, but they were a spot in the feast of love. Now, that may seem a heartless invitation to come to this love feast. I confess, so it is, it is right heartless, it is a wonder we are not stricken with silence; and it is a wonder the places ye sit on are not made the places of your graves before ye go hence.

Now, that we may go on and venture, and that we may approach to this holy feast, we, in the name of the Master of the feast, debar and excommunicate all them that hate Christ, and all profane and scandalous persons, that they come not to eat and drink their own condemnation. And in his name and authority, I debar all strangers to God, and enemies to our Lord Jesus Christ. Alas! we fear we have debarred many. Oh, he is gone, he is gone, and we care not for him! However,

On the other hand, we do, in the name and authority of our blessed Lord, who is the Master of the feast, invite all those who are convinced of their need of Christ. We do, in his precious name, invite all those that desire to have him, and eternally to enjoy him; and all his friends, we invite you to come; this is his command, 'Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved,' Song v. 1. Alas! I fear Christ shall not speak that word to many. We will not say but he may, as he has many times

graciously disappointed our fears, he may make this a feast of love, 'and a feast of fat things well refined upon the lees.' Are ye ready? Are ye ready? Then, come, &c.

If the Master of the feast be come, we would desire to know it; it is long since Christ spoke that word, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' And, sure I am, ye cannot communicate without him the day. I shall only say this, there are two visible attendants that Christ the Master of the feast brings with him when he comes, which I do not see here this day.

The *first* visible attendant that Christ the Master of the feast brings with him when he comes, is repentance: he brings repentance with him: and is not repentance away?

The *second* visible attendant that Christ the Master of the feast brings with him when he comes, is faith: he brings faith with him; and is not faith away? Many of us may question, if ever we had faith or not? There is not a step we walk, but we thrust a spear in the side of precious Christ. Now, are ye all resolved to eat and drink of this feast? Look to it, sirs, there may be poison in this cup, that ye are going to drink. And we, after his example, who appointed this ordinance, read our warrant, 1 Cor. xi. 23. 'And he blessed it, and brake it;' and let us bless him, that has prepared such a blessed feast: and seek his blessing, who hath appointed it for our spiritual nourishment, &c. Now the bread is changed: now the wine is changed, not as to their substance, but their use. 'He took the bread, and brake it, and said,' &c. There are these five things that Christ has taken to commend himself, which may make us fall in love with him, in this the day of our feast.

1. That ere long he shall come again; Christ has a purpose, and is longing to be again; he says, I will give this feast till I come again, and then I will give you a better.

2. Wonder at his condescendency. It would be a wonder to see a beggar sit down with a prince; but here is a greater wonder! O what a sweet pavilion is love! There was never such a royal pavilion as Christ and his bride in the midst of his love! In the greatest of all his trouble, he looked toward you with love? Now, where are your thoughts of his love? Have ye higher thoughts of Christ now, than when ye sat down? O! who is like unto him, that is the King of saints? Will ye carry away with you these thoughts of him, 'who is the chiefest among ten thousand?' Oh! have ye seen him? Oh! have ye seen him? Alas! I fear he is gone. Of all the persons that ever ye saw, ye never saw his match? There is a soul-captivating look in the sight of his face, that if ye once saw him, ye would never desire to look on another?' &c.

A

SPEECH

BY

Mr ANDREW GRAY, *at* Kirklistoun, *before the Communion, upon the* 12*th of June*, 1653.

THE subject of what I am to speak upon to you at this time, shall be of the everlasting joys of heaven, that are preached unto the saints, that so your hearts may long and breathe for the excellent and most glorious mansions and habitations provided for the saints. And that which I shall speak, I shall reduce to these things.

First, I would give you a short description of heaven. And we conceive there are these three descriptions that we may give you of that excellent and precious place provided for the saints.

The *first* description of heaven is this, it is a rest without a rest. This is clear, by comparing Heb. iv. 9. 'There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God,' with Rev. iv. 8. It is said, 'These who are about the throne, rest not day and night, crying, holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,' &c. Socompare these places together, and ye will see heaven is a rest without a rest. They rest not, and yet it is a precious rest to the saints, never forbearing to give praise to him.

The *second* description of heaven is this, it is a place where the soul is always satisfied. It is a place where the soul has always a sight of God, and yet desiring always a sight of God. It is a place where the soul is always embracing God, and yet desiring to embrace him. It is a place where the soul is always feeding, and yet never satisfied. Would ye know what is in heaven? I tell you, in a word, there is satisfaction in heaven, and there is hunger in heaven: they are always satisfied, and yet always hungry. But know, that heaven is full of mysteries, sirs.

The *third* description of heaven is this, it is a place where joy and love are eternally flowing in, and admiration and praise eternally flowing out. And ye shall know why they speak not much there, because all their language is almost, 'Hallelujah, praise to the Lamb, that sits upon the throne.' The reason is, because there is much admiration: there they wonder much, therefore they cannot stay to speak much. O what would you think, but one half hour to be taken in within the ports of that blessed city, and to hear that heavenly music? O but heaven be a pleasant place.

Secondly, That which I would speak upon is this, the exer-

cise of the saints there. I think, there are five things that take up the saints exercise above. 1. Admiration. 2. Praise. 3. Joy. 4. Love. 5. The beholding of Jesus's blessed countenance. Admiration, praise, joy, love, and sight, are much of their exercise in heaven. There is not one look there, that is not fixed on precious Christ. There is not one moving of the tongue in heaven that is not taken up in commending precious Christ. There is not one moving of the feet there, that is not taken up in following of him. There is not one moving of the hand in heaven, that is not taken up in infolding precious Christ. There is not one thought there, that is not taken up in thinking on precious Christ. There is not one desire in heaven, that is not taken up in desiring of precious Christ. What makes heaven such a heartsome house? Is it not precious Christ? Rev. xxi. 23. 'And the Lamb is the light thereof,' as if John would have said, 'Heaven would be but a dark house, if He were not there:' but Jesus is the light of that city. O! know ye heaven, sirs? If ye knew it, how would ye long to be there, in eternity, where all the Persons in the Trinity cry, 'Come up hither to us who are here!' And all the angels and saints cry, 'Come up hither to us who are here!' It is good to be there. Now if ye would be taken up in longing to be there,

I will give you, in the *third* place, some hid draughts of the excellences of heaven. Do you not know, heaven is a pleasant place? But what makes it pleasant but this, that the windows and whole streets of it are sprinkled over with the roses of Sharon, and lily of the valley. And I will give you these stairs of the excellency of the higher house. O what a brave sight was it John saw, Rev. xxi. 9. 10. 'And he talked with me, and said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me to an exceeding high mountain, and showed me the holy city, the new Jerusalem?' And was not that an excellent sight?

First, This commends heaven; we have there the soul-satisfactory vision in beholding of God; there we behold God face to face. And is not that an excellent sight? Here we behold Christ but through the vail of ordinances, 'and see him darkly, as through a glass;' here we but see him through the lattice; 'but they see him there face to face.' I know not what will be the bride's thoughts, when Christ shall take her first in his arms. Ye know there is such a thing, as we call the kindness of heaven; but, alas! we know it not: but what shall be your thoughts when Christ shall take you in his arms, if that ever he take you? I think, we shall fall asunder. O! is not heaven an excellent place? I would say this to you, we think there are these six

questions that may arise with a Christian, and he may ask them all at Christ; and O that we were asking them oftner.

The *first* question that we may be put to propose to Christ, is this, shall ever this tongue, that hath so often broken the third command, and polluted the holiness of God, be made like the tongues of angels, to express the virtue of Jesus Christ? Ye shall wonder to hear yourselves speaking in heaven. Ye shall cry out, when ye hear yourselves speaking of Christ in heaven, is this ignorant I?

The *second* question that we may be put to propose to Christ, is this, shall ever these eyes, that hath been the windows through which many iniquities have been conveyed into the soul; shall ever those eyes, that have wandered, and loved, and looked so much on vanity, be admitted to behold the excellent and spotless One, that sits upon the throne? I think, the first hour a Christian shall see Christ, if there were hours in eternity, (in a manner) he would wink, when he shall look him in the face, and shall see his face, his transforming face! where will we turn our eyes? A sight of Christ will make us eternally wonder. Are ye groaning for a sight of Christ? There are some that would never desire another sight than they see. O think ye not fifty years a long time to be out of the precious presence of Christ? Are ye not longing, old men, think ye not long to die, and be dissolved?

The *third* question that we may be put to propose to Christ, is this, shall ever these ears, which have hearkened to so much cursing of God, and have taken such delight to hear vanity, ever hear these songs above? There is one of two things we must hear: *First*, We shall either hear the eternal shriekings of the souls in prison, every one crying out, alas, for evermore! never a word heard almost, but, alas! O there is a strong yelling there! O what a dreadful thing were it, to hear them one half hour crying! *Secondly*, Or then, ye shall hear that excellent music, and that excellent concord that is amongst all the higher harpers! O how sweetly do they sing! Now comfort yourselves with this. The day is coming, when ye shall hang your harps no more on willow-trees, because ye are in a strange land, but shall eternally cry out, 'praise to him that sits upon the throne!'

There is that *fourth* question ye may be put to ask, shall ever these feet of ours, that have walked so much after vanity, and pursued folly; shall ever these feet follow the Lamb wherever he goeth? I think, it will be a wonder, if ever the sound of many of our feet be heard in heaven! O what a pleasant thing is it to walk through the valley of delights! If so we may speak, Christ leads the ring in heaven, he goeth foremost, and all the children of the house go at his back. Think ye eternity will be a long

time? Alas! I think it shall be short: they shall not count a thousand years in God's sight one day.

The *fifth* question that we may be put to ask, is, shall ever these hearts of ours, which have been a cage of all unclean birds, and a house to idols, shall they be made an habitation, and a dwelling place for the Holy Ghost?

The *sixth* and *last* question that we may be put to ask is, think ye that these hands, that have been the instrument of so much mischief, and committed so much iniquity, shall ever infold that matchless Object, who sits upon the throne? O! what will you do, when you get Christ first in your arms? I confess, I know not well, if the first day of your being in heaven, sirs, be the pleasantest day, I think not, even though ye never saw your husband before, the longer ye be there, ye will love him the better. What shall I say there is in heaven? There is no outcast in heaven between Christ and the saints, there is no desertion, no unbelief, no misconstruction of Christ, no debating of his wisdom; in a manner, when we go through the gates of the New Jerusalem, there is the grave of desertion, and the grave of jealousy, and the grave of our misbelief, and the grave of all our idols, and we shall never follow them any more. O! may ye say, will not faith leave me, and hope leave me, when I come to the gates of heaven? Yes, faith and hope will leave thee there. But what a pleasant day will it be, when faith shall yield itself to love and sight! Faith and hope are the attendants of the Christian here: but love and sight shall be the eternal attendants of the Christian above. As it were, faith and hope fight the battle, and love and sight sit at home, and divide the spoil. Faith and hope embrace Christ through the vail; but love and sight embraces Christ with the eyes. We must leave our faith and hope, but we shall never weep for the leaving of such a companion. We may say that word, Heb. xi. 32. 'And what shall I say more, time would fail me.' What shall I say more to the commendation of heaven? Time would fail me. Yea, what shall I say more of eternity? Time would fail me. There is this I would say more, Though I must end my discourse with this, 'What shall I say more?' There are six complaints amongst Christians here.

First, There are some Christians that are weeping in secret under their ignorance and presumption, saying, I am more brutish than any man, I have not the understanding of the holy: I never saw such a blind ignorant as I am, but comfort yourselves in this when first ye shall enter the gates of that blessed city, all your clouds shall shed, there shall not be a wrong thought or conception of God throughout all eternity; and ye shall begin to say to yourselves, is this ignorant I, and brutish I?

The *second* complaint among Christians here is, I am under much desertion; I never go to pray, but I meet with an absent God, a vailed Christ, an angry Christ, and then I cannot speak to him: but comfort yourselves in this, there is no desertion in heaven; there is no such complaint in all the higher house as this, 'How long, Lord, wilt thou hide thy face from me?' Though I confess it is no wonder, to go to heaven with a vailed Christ, because when he is sent to us, we know not how to entertain him. I know not what your faith is; but it is a mystery to some folk; faith that they shall never weary of the service of heaven, is a mystery; or will it not be a mystery, and a great wonder, if we, who cannot pray one half hour to an end, but we will be toiled, as if we had done some marvellous work, shall never weary of that service? But comfort yourselves with this, ye shall through all the ages of eternity praise him, and never weary. O blessed are they that are above. There is no wearying in heaven; but, alas! few of us shall go there.

The *third* complaint amongst Christians here is, Alas! I know not whether I shall go to heaven or not; I am little taken up in disputing my interest, or questioning the reality of my faith. I would say this, I would fain it were come the length of a dispute. I know there is much disputing; but, alas! we dispute more with our light, than with our conscience. There is much exercise amongst us; but, I fear, it is more the exercise of the light of our judgment, than of our conscience. The most part of our Christianity is in our light. Be not mistaken, for I wonder, if our exercise were in our conscience, that we could dispute our interest one day, and not be in hazard to be distracted. There is no doubt, in heaven, when ye go thro' the threshold of that divine entry, ye may say, farewell disputing and debating.

The *fourth* complaint that some are troubled with here is, alas! I have no love to Christ. And I think, it is true, in relation to many of us: O! whither is love gone? I suppose, that if angels would come and speak to some of our hearts; I warrant, that there are some, if this were their last confession, might say, love is gone! but comfort yourselves in this, love will be much of your exercise in heaven! Sometimes we are put to dispute, whether or no the saints exercise love to any beside Christ? Do not mistake it, one saint shall not hate another saint: but, I may say, one saint shall not love another saint. My ground is this, I know not, if they will have any love to spare to any thing beside Christ; neither do I think they have any thought on any other but on Christ. O to be near him!

The *fifth* complaint that many will say here is, alas! I will never never prevail over my idols, and get them forced out of

my heart. There are some of us that will go down to the grave with their idols in their hearts: but, O! what think ye of heaven? All your idols shall be mortified ere ye go there. It is a mystery to some, if that these idols they were wrestling with all their days leave them! I think, there are some would wish mortification were not lawful. I think, there was never such a generation as most of us are, when we come to the church and sit down, and when we rise up, we may cry out, we want mortification; O we want it! Dare I say, there are some who have the profession of religion, and are drawing Jesus at their heels, and embracing idols in their hearts. I say, your religion is not much worth, if ye want mortification. O believe it, it is the ruin of many that are talking and speaking of Christ, and will not for their pleasure mortify their predominant lusts. O that cursed tongue, that has spoken much of Christ, perhaps with it you may curse him eternally. Know, it is not much to be a tongue Christian. I know what makes our religion prove false, we take it up before it takes us up. Many of us take it by guess. I desire not to prophesy sad things; but, believe it, if religion were more out of fashion, Christ would have fewer followers; it is much to love a persecuted Christ. It is much to love Christ, when ye must lay down all that ever ye have, or else he will not own you. We follow Christ because of the loaves, and not because of the virtue of him. Alas! there are some that are knit to Christ with a very small thread; however, your idols will forsake you, when ye are gone to heaven.

The *sixth* and *last* complaint that troubles some here is, alas! I never prayed with delight. It is true, there are many that go about duty, and I will tell you the end of it, it is to satisfy a natural conscience: will ye search it, and ye will find it to be a truth. There are ten for one, that would rather be at peace with their consciences, than be at peace with God. It is your great design to go about duties to silence your conscience. You would pray less, come to the church less, and read the scriptures less, were it not for your conscience. O there are some, would fain be quit of their conscience. I shall not stand to speak any longer of the joys of heaven, I shall say this, the Father, the first Person of the blessed Trinity, cries out, come up hither to us who are here! Christ, the second person of the blessed Trinity, cries, come up hither to us who are here? And the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, cries out, come up hither to us who are here! And the joys of heaven, if they had a tongue, would cry out, O come up hither! Doth not that sweet and blessed transcendency in the face of Christ, cry out, come up hither to us? Doth not our necessity cry out, go up hither?

There are some that think to speel up to heaven by the short ladder of presumption. O think ye ever go to heaven, will we be all there, where we will fight no more? Think ye, our lodging will be taken up in one place at night? I dare not say, but there will be strange divisions amongst us, and we know not if we shall meet again. There may be some of us in eternity ere it be long; and it is not much matter, for eternity is sweet to go to heaven. I remember a word in Job ix. 25. 'Now my days are swifter than a post; they flee away as the ships;' or, as the word is, 'They pass away as the ships of desires.' To Christians, death clips the thread of their life, but it makes up the everlasting knot betwixt Christ and them; death is your friend, ay, death is the coronation day of the Christian? death is Christ's messenger to bring home the Christian. Ye know, great princes and kings, when they are crowned, when they send for their bride, send a great convoy to her. But this is Christ's messenger to his bride, even death. Sometimes Christ will send death with a letter of commendations, and that is to speed her; and sometimes Christ will send death with a love letter in his hand, and that makes her shout for joy. O let us love him therefore, and long to be with him for evermore. *Amen.*

A

WORD OF EXHORTATION,

BY

Mr. ANDREW GRAY, *at* Kirklistoun, *upon the* 12*th of June*, 1653.

FIRST TABLE.

I Suppose, there are some of us here the day, that it had been better for us we had been at a mountain side. I suppose, there are some of us here the day, that would have given their consent to the murdering of Christ Jesus. I think faith is away, and God away too; and would you know the reason of it? It is, we feed and feast without Christ. I do not desire to enter upon a description of Christ, neither do I desire to conceal his comely beauty. But, O believers, and expectants of heaven! there are five parts of Christ's blessed body that might overcome you, and constrain you to cry out, that ye are content to take him.

First, Does not the face of Christ overcome you? And is not

that a pleasant part of him, is there not much beauty there? Yea, as much beauty as might overcome these cursed hearts of ours. And we may say this of him, there was never one person sawhim, that turned to be his enemy.

The *second* part of Christ's body that may overcome you, and constrain you into subjection to him is, his blessed speech; heard ye neyer him, 'that spake as never man spake?'

The *third* part of Christ's body that sometimes overcome his own, and makes them yield to him, is his blessed feet. When they behold his dispensations, they are constrained to cry out, 'How beautiful is he, whose legs are as pillars of gold, set upon sockets of silver!' O to see the stately goings of this Prince in the sanctuary.

The *fourth* part of Christ's body that useth to overcome his own, is his blessed eyes. It was but one look of him, that made 'Peter go out and weep bitterly.' And let me say this by the way, I think this communion had been the better, if some of us had not been here; and it is an evidence, that there are but few sights of Christ among us.

The *fifth* part of Christ's blessed body that useth to overcome his own, is his blessed hands. O what a life, think ye, is it, to lie betwixt the breasts and arms of him? This is a feast, above the feast of Ahasuerus, that lasted for an hundred and fourscore days. But there is a feast above that, that will not have an end. And I would ask you this question, will ye go there, think ye? Would ye know what these elements are? I shall tell you what they are, they are even the portraiture of Christ; they are even Christ drawn upon the cross, and all these five wounds that he had. Know ye the language of the wound in his side? It says, 'Come, come,' and the wounds in his hands says, 'Come, come.' And who would not come then?

Now, in that night wherein he was betrayed, that decreed night, that blessed night, that remarkable night, which night if it had not been, we should never have had this day. O bless him for that night! in a manner, when Paul speaks of him, he sets him out in general terms, he says, *He, he.* And it says this to us, that Paul thought it an endless work to recommend precious Christ. And he said, 'eat and drink in remembrance of me.' I think Christ knows not forgetfulness, but in this, he forgets believers wrongs that they do unto him; but he will forget their good works.

However, that ye might have a complete feast, 'He took the cup, saying, drink ye all of it.' I would ask three questions at you, and I would have you think on them.

The *first* question I would ask at you is, what are your pre-

sent thoughts of Christ? O if he would come and say, 'Behold me! Behold me!' One sight of Christ would make us all lie dead at his feet, and cry out, 'Woe is us, we are undone!' What would ye give for a sight of a crucified Saviour, if he would come in and say, friend, behold the wounds that I received for you?

The *second* question I would ask at you is, would ye not give much for half an hour's faith and tenderness? What would you give for that?

The *third* question I would ask at you is, does the tasting of this feast make you to hope to taste of that feast that is above, that they that are there are drinking of? I confess, we drink of the streams, but they of the fountain. O when shall these blue heavens be rent, and we admitted to the marriage supper of the Lamb? I shall say no more, but long for the day, when all the language of heaven and earth shall be, *Come, come.* Then shall Christ be crying, *Come, come.* And ten thousand of angels crying, *Come, come.* And the bride that is below shall cry, *Come, come.* And they that are in the exercise of faith, saying, *Come, come.* What a blessedness will that be, think ye, that ever these cursed thoughts of ours shall yet live to cry, *Come, come,* 'blessed Lord Jesus?' O for one sight of him, we would even take him in our arms? Would ye be content with this, that this place were your graves. Now commend precious Christ, and let him bless his ordinances to you, &c.

SECOND TABLE.

WHY halt ye between two opinions, friends? If your idols be God, then embrace them, and if Christ be God, as indeed he is, then embrace him. Met ye never with such a sight of Christ, that constrained you to cry out, O for the tongue of an angel to express his love? Met ye never with such a sight, that made you to cry out, O for a thousand hearts to give to precious Christ? I think, there are four things that put a Christian to a peremptory, or to a *non-plus*, or to a, what shall I say?

The *first* thing that puts a Christian to a peremptory, or to a *non-plus*, or to a, what shall I say, is, when a Christian is under the precious impressions of love, according to 2 Sam. vii. 20. And what can David say more? O David, what have you said that you art put to a *non-plus?* So some, David says, 'I can speak no more but this, I can speak no more!' A Christian is put to this sometimes, all he can say is, 'I can say no more!' Did you never meet with such an enjoyment at prayers, and at

sacraments, that you were constrained to leave off speaking, and begin and wonder?

The *second* thing that puts a Christian to a peremptory, or to a *non-plus*, or to a, what shall I say, is, when they are under the sense of the wrath of God, and drinking in the arrows of the Almighty, like to that in Psalm lxxxviii.

The *third* thing that puts a Christian to a peremptory, or to a *non-plus*, or to a, what shall I say, is, when they meet with the accomplishment of the promises, according to that word in Isa. xxxviii. 15. 'What shall I say? for he himself hath done it.'

The *fourth* thing that puts a Christian to a peremptory, or to a *non-plus*, or to a, what shall I say, is, when they are admitted to glorious discoveries, according to that word in Dan. x. 16. When Daniel got but a sight of God, he fell down at his feet: I shall not speak much to this, what you see with your eyes, I would only say this, the communion will satisfy all your senses. O Christians! would you have the sense of your sight satisfied? Come here and behold love shining in a cup of red wine! If ye could get the vail drawn aside, ye might get a sight that ye would not forget again. And would you have your sense of taste satisfied? O come here, and drink spiced wine. And would you have the sense of touching satisfied? Come and thrust in your fingers into his side, and be no more faithless, but believing. Would you have the sense of smelling satisfied? Then come here, and be refreshed 'with him that is perfumed with all the powders of the merchant.' And would you have the sense of hearing satisfied? There is not one piece of this bread, but breathes incomprehensible love, it is not possible for angels to comprehend these thoughts that he had, when he hang between the heaven and the earth, O what were his thoughts that he had that night that he said, 'This is my body, take, and eat?' O but it was a blessed communion where Christ was! Think ye not but Christ could speak better of himself, than angels could do? He said unto them, 'Take, and eat,' with my blessing, for this is the last 'cup of the new Testament: drink it in remembrance of me, until I come again.' I think, it says three things.

First, It says this, that the feast was not a complete feast; and therefore he would come again.

Secondly, It says this, that we should remember that Christ is to come again, when we are going about this ordinance. O but it will be a heartless feast if ye comfort not yourselves with this. 'Behold he comes like a roe!'

Thirdly, And then it says this, that Christ desires to be with us. O if we were all desirous to be in heaven, as he is there, we would not be long here. Are your hearts in heaven, O Chris-

tians? Are your treasures there? Are your thoughts there? Are our eyes there? Is your faith there? I know not what of a Christian ought to be out of heaven, even when he is here, but the lumpish tabernacle of clay, that it shall, ere it be long, be clothed with immortality. Now God bless this feast unto you.'

THIRD TABLE.

LO, durst I say this unto you, the morrow be as the day, and much more in abundance. O let us even change the Epicure's divinity, and let us say, 'Eat and drink, and say, the morrow will be as the day.' O but it were a blessed life to know him ere we go hence and be no more. I think, without too far encroaching upon the mysteries of heaven, there are six questions that a Christian shall propose when he goes first there.

The *first* question may be this, Is it I? Is it I? cursed I, that has lien among the pots, and now made like the wings of a dove, that are covered with silver, whose feathers are of yellow gold? O expectants of heaven! comfort yourselves with this, the day is coming when you shall mistake yourselves! O what a day will that be, that brings that question, Is it I? Is it I?

The *second* question, we suppose, may be this, Is it he? Is it he? Is it that exalted he? The first sight of Christ will make them say, Is it he, whom I saw in prayer and sacraments? Is it he, whom I saw in preaching? O what will your thoughts be when ye get first that blessed One in your arms, and made to cry out, now am I rich? Now I am full? Now I am eternally made up? Ye shall then be forced to cry out, 'Hold thy hand precious Christ, for I can hold no more.'

The *third* question we suppose, may be this, Is this the communion that I had when I was below? Is this the bread indeed, that blessed bread that is above? It is bread of another grain, and of another taste. And I think, if angels were to come down from heaven to this church, and choose for their subject, the taste of that bread that is above, I think they would close with that in Heb. xi. 32. 'what shall we say more? for time would fail us.'

The *fourth* question that we think a Christian shall be put to at their first landing is, Is it they? Is it they? I suppose, that if two that are sitting here, and knew one another most distinctly, if they were presently transported up to heaven, their first question should be, Is it she, or he that I was sitting with? Is it he that trampled under foot the blood of the Lamb? I think there will be some of the Christian's time in heaven betwixt Christ and

them, spent in interrogations, when I feasted you at such a communion, did I not well? And when I deserted you, did I not well? When I humbled you, did I not well? And when I lifted you up, did I not well? And when I sent you to such a place of my world, did I not well? And so you shall be forced to cry out and say this to the commendation of him, O precious Christ has done all things well.

The *fifth* question that we think a Christian should be put to at his first landing is, Is this the blessedness of the saints? Is this the blessedness of the saints? I know none that goes to heaven, but they have some dark discoveries of it before they go there. But, O what a broad sight will that be, when Christ shall come to the gate, and shall say, Welcome friends! What alacrity will there be, when Christ shall take you in his arms! O these raptures of love that will be there! Heard you never tell of such a thing as this, the courtesy of the city.

The *sixth* and *last* question that we think a Christian shall be put to at his first landing is, Shall it be always so? Shall it be always so? What think ye of eternity, friends? Did you never call time cruel, O cruel time that hasteth not thy pace, that long eternity might approach? Were you never at that, if it had been in your power to have shortened your sand-glass, you would have given it a touch in the by-going? O but I think, love has little skill of arithmetic. Love cannot count a jot. Love counteth every moment's absence, eternity; and is not that bad arithmetic? And love counts a thousand years in his presence, but a day; and is not that bad arithmetic? O but there are much in these two words, *He* and *Me*.

'In the night he was betrayed, He took the cup.' I think all that angels can say is comprehended in these four letters, *He* and *Me*, 'In the night he was betrayed: In the night the Son of God, the second Person of the blessed Trinity, was betrayed,' he then had his delights in the habitable parts of the earth, before the world was, he was betrayed; think ye not but that was a blessed word, 'My God, my God; why hast thou forsaken me?' If Christ had not been forsaken, we should have been forsaken to all eternity. We read of a king, that at his death "left his heart to his wife as a precious diamond." I shall not approve that practice; but this we may say, "Our precious King took "his heart from his breast, and did distil it in his blood, and "said to his friends, 'Drink ye all of it.'" O bless him, O bless him, that ever there was an *All* in it. 'This is the cup of the New Testament.' I think a soul that eats not by faith, eateth poison: for Christ is the best friend, and the worst foe that ye

can have. I shall close all with these three or four things that are true of precious Christ, and true of ourselves too.

First, Is not this true of him, O friends, that ye can never commend precious Christ enough, and yourselves too little? Ye would seek that, if it were with your blood, that ye can never enough commend precious Christ. What can be the reason, that there is not a word in heaven, but one, 'Hallelujah to him that sits upon the throne? I shall give you these three grounds why there is not a word in heaven but 'Hallelujah, Hallelujah.'

First, There is much silence in heaven, and little speaking.

Secondly, Much wondering in heaven, and little talking.

Thirdly, A Christian is inclosed within a circle of wonders, the angels wondering upon the right-hand, and believers wondering when they reflect upon themselves; yea, there is not one piece of that city but it is a wonder. O these excellent spirits! These wells! that pleasant work that is there!

The *second* thing that ye would say of Christ, and yourselves to is, I think ye can never enough love precious Christ, and yourselves too little. O for an heart enlarged as the sand upon the sea-shore, to love him. What a thing is it, think ye, to have Christ between your breasts?

The *third* thing that you may subscribe concerning Christ and yourselves too, is, I can never trust precious Christ too much, and myself too little; I would say this by the way, have ye a necessity? O say ye, I have many; I say, there is a name in Christ to answer all thy necessities. And though this may seem to be a strange assertion, yet we are persuaded that it is true. Have you a necessity that Christ cannot answer? Then give it a name, and give to Christ, and he will make it out to you.

The *fourth* thing that ye may say of Christ, and yourselves too, is this, I can never think too much of precious Christ, and in some respect too little of myself. I would ask this question at you, whereto were your first thoughts the day? It was a bad token, if Christ got not your first thoughts this day, and if he get not your last thoughts the day. Now friends we are going to part, will we all meet again, think ye? Will we all sit down at the table where we shall never rise again? Now let him be blessed, and bless his ordinances to you, &c.

FOURTH TABLE.

THERE are two great books that you have to read; there is Christ and yourselves. And I think, when ye have read

over the first page of the first book, O ye may wonder how dark his name is! I say, you cannot imagine a necessity that hinders you from closing with Christ, but he hath taken a name to answer it. I think there are seven great questions that hinder a Christian's closing with Christ; and all are answered in that excellent name that Christ hath taken to himself, in Exod. xxxiv. 6.

There is that *first* and great objection, I dare not come. Why? because I am polluted and defiled. Is it not answered in that letter of his name. 'He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious?' And though we be sinful, he can make mercy triumph over judgment.

The *second* objection why they will not come to Christ, is this, O, say ye, I have nothing to commend myself to him. What want ye? I want a heart to come with, and I want ornaments and excellent robes. I would ask this question at you, want ye imperfections? O, say ye, I have many; then ye want not something to come with; and that is answered in that letter of his name, 'He is gracious.' There is a blessed freedom in the exercise of his love.

The *third* objection that stops you from closing with Christ is this, I have not only offended the day, but I have done it of old; and that is answered from that letter of his name, 'He is long-suffering.' Christ cannot be outwearied in *long-suffering*.

The *fourth* objection is this, O, I am not only a sinner, but I shall tell you a confession of faith, Job xxii. 3. 'Is not my sins great?' And is not that answered from that letter of his name, 'He is abundant in grace and goodness?' O that noble victory that love shall have over justice, if we may imagine there can be any contest between them; for this court hath reconciled righteousness and love; 'righteousness and love did kiss each other.

The *fifth* objection is this, O how many covenants have I broken, and how dare I come to Christ? Is not that answered from that letter of his name, 'He is abundant in truth?' I shall tell you Christ's carriage and believers in the way to heaven, in one word, there is not a day but we lose our grips of Christ; O, but he never loses his grips of us. Did ye never see friends embrace each other? So it is when we lose our grips of Christ, these everlasting arms of his embrace us; these arms that did first pluck us out of hell, and have us to pull into heaven. O for that pull that we shall never desire another.

The *sixth* objection is this, I know Christ is gracious; but here the debate stands, I know not if he will be merciful to me; I think he shall name his curses to me; and is there not a letter in our blessed Lord's name that answers that too, 'he keeps mercy unto thousands?' Friends, if I may so, call you what wot

ye, but ye are among those, Exod. xxxiv. 7. And if ye be in amongst them, O bless him for it. I think, if there were no more in scripture to commend precious Christ, it were more than sufficient. Are there not thousands in heaven, sirs? O but we will be a fair company, if we were once all together; we shall be like *olive plants round about his table.* O blessed be he, that hath his quiver full of these blessed thousands. Now have ye any more to say? Yes, I have one thing, and if it were answered, I ought to debate no more: what is that? I am under the power of sin against light, and after resolutions, and under breach of covenants at sacraments: and will ye think that I dare come to Christ? Yes, ye shall never be welcomer, than when ye bring a burden on your back. Were ye under sins against light, and against free love, and after vows? Yet there is a letter in his name that answers that, O read it, for it is full of love, 'He forgets iniquity, transgression, and sin.' Ye think, what needs all these three words? They are not needless repetitions, ye may be persuaded of that, there is no sin ye can be under, but love can answer it; love was never put to a *non-plus;* yet all your objections may be cut off with this, 'It is his will' that we should believe on him; and in hopes that ye will engage, we give you the sacrament, 'take, and eat:' he gave them the bread to confirm the manna. This is even like two married persons, putting to their hands to a contract; and there the great seal that is put to Christ's contract. and all that is required of you is, to put to your hands to the contract. O, say ye, I cannot write; O say ye, we will put our hand to Christ's, and let him lead the pen, and say, even so, I take him to be my Lord and Husband, and do vow and covenant to be a dutiful wife unto him. 'Eat and drink upon these terms.' Will ye not think that there are many eyes in heaven fixed upon Christ? And, if we so may speak, yet there is not one eye in heaven that is not fixed on him. And yet, are there not many hands in heaven? And would you know what they are doing? They are all taking Christ in their arms. And is not this a mystery, that so many thousands should get a grip of Christ at once? O but they be a heartsome company! They are eye-witness to our communion this day. Though, I think, if they reflect on us, they would even pity us, that there is so great difference between us and them. I shall say no more. But O to have been present, when that glorious person Jesus Christ was hanging between heaven and earth? What would you have said? Might you have cried out that word that David hath to another purpose, 'let thy hand be against me, and my father's house?' What hath that spotless Lamb done? I shall not determine that question, whether angels and Abraham, and the twelve patriarchs

saw, when he was hanging between heaven and earth? But such a sight it was, as we desire, ye may have your faith in exercise upon a crucified Saviour. I shall give you three parts of his blessed body, that ye would kiss at a communion.

First, There are some that cannot kiss his mouth, it is a great act of presumption; but they would kiss his feet, to testify their love; and his hands, to testify their subjection; and his rosy lips that once waxed pale, to testify their communion and fellowship with him. I would say this now, let this bread be a witness against you in the day of the Lord, if ye be not content to take him.

I remember a word of one that was determined in a thing, and he was desired to be deliberate: and he answered, "There need-"ed no deliberation in so good a thing." So I think, ye need no advisement to take Christ, ye may take him upon implicit faith; for he will not disappoint you: take him upon his word. Himself make you to do so. Amen and Amen.

A

LETTER,

Sent from Mr. ANDREW GRAY, when he was upon his death-bed, to my Lord WARISTOUN.

My Lord,

IT may seem strange, that after so long interruption of intercourse with your Lordship by letters, I should, at this juncture of time, write to you, wherein there seems to be a toleration of tongues, and lusts, and religion, where many do by their practice speak, our tongues are our own. I am afraid, that sad word be often spoken to Scotland yet seven times more, "That whereas he hath chastised with whips, he will do it by scorpions, and his little finger shall be heavier than his loins in former times." If our judgments, that seem to approach, were known, and these terrible things in righteousness, by which he, whose furnace is in Jerusalem, is like to speak to us, were seen and printed on a board, it might make us cry out, "Who shall live when God doth these things, and who can dwell with everlasting burnings?"

He hath broken his staff of bands, and is threatening to break his staff of beauty, that his covenant, which he hath made with all the people, might be broken. Is it not to be feared, "that the

sword of the justice of God is bathed in heaven, and will come down to make a sacrifice, not in the land of Idumea, or Bozrah, but on these that were once his people, who hath broken his everlasting covenant, and changed his ordinances?" What shall Scotland be called? Lorubamah and Lo-ammi, which was termed Beula and Hephziba, 'A people delighted in, and married to the Lord.' I think that curse in Zeph. i. 17. is much accomplished in our days, "They shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord." Does not our carriage under all these speaking and afflicting dispensations, fighting against God in the furnace, and our dross not departing from us, speak this with our hearts, "That for three transgressions, and for four, he will not turn away the punishment of the covenanted lands?" And this shall be our blot in all generations: this is that Scotland, that in its afflictions sins more and more. It is no wonder then that we be put to our, "How long, how long wilt thou hide thy face?" How long wilt thou forget, O Lord? O Lord, how shall thy jealousy burn like a fire, and we hear the confused noise of war, and rumours of war?

Since God has put it, 'How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? Jer. xxxi. 22. Are ye not gadding about to change, turning his glory into shame, and loving lying vanities? And there are four 'How longs' that God is put to lament over Scotland, and which are most in Luke ix. 41. 'How long shall I be with you, and suffer you?' Is not Christ necessitated to depart, and to make us a land sown with salt and grass in our most frequented congregations? Ay, believe it, ere it be long, these two words shall be our lot, there is that in Jer. ii. 31. 'O generation, see ye the word of the Lord;' when these that would not hear him in his word, shall see him in his dispensations; when all our threatenings shall be preached to our ears. And that word in Hosea vii. 12. 'I will chastise them as their congregation hath heard.' O shall poor Scotland serve themselves heirs to the sins of the Gadarenes, to desire Christ to flit out of their coasts, and to subscribe the bill of divorce, in a manner, before Christ subscribe it? It is like, these three sad evidences of affliction that are in Isa. xlvii. 11. 'shall come upon us in their perfection.' I shall add no more on a sad subject.

My Lord, not being able to write you with my own hand, I have thought fit to present these few thoughts unto you by the hand of a friend.

I know not, I will not limit him, but I may stand within that judgment-hall, where that glorious and spotless High-priest doth it, with that train that does fill the temple: and, O to be among the last of these that are bidden come in, and partake of that

everlasting peace! O what a poor report will the messengers of the covenant and gospel make, whose image they crucify in their hearts, to whom I may apply these words by allusion, "The morning of conversion is to them as the terrors of death, and as the terrors of the breaking in of the day to the destroying them?" What a poor account will some of us make, both as to the answer of our conscience, and to the answer of his pains taken upon us, and to the answer of his promises, and as to the answer of his threatening, and as to the answer of his commands, and as to the answer of our light? Now, not to trouble your Lordship, whom I also highly reverence, and my soul was knit unto in the Lord, but that you would bespeak my case to the great Master of requests, and my broken case before him, who has pleaded the desperate case of many, according to the sweet word in Lamentation iii. 56. This is all at this time from one in a very weak condition, in a great fever, who for much of seven nights has but sleeped little at all, but has been keeped in a right sad and grievous torment from his hand, with many other sad particulars and circumstances.

I shall say no more, but I am yours in some single respects, I hope, I may say, dying in Christ.

Let these present my respects to your Lady and Children.

FINIS.

D. M'KENZIE, PRINTER, GLASGOW.